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OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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WITH SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

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EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

WHETHER Christ died for *all* men, or for a *part* only? is a question which has been much agitated, since the Reformation, though, according to Milner, the Church, from the earliest ages, rested in the opinion that Christ *died for all.* He does not except even Augustine, whom Prosper, his admirer and follower, and a strict Predestinarian, represents as maintaining that Christ gave himself a ransom for all;* so far at least as to make provision for their salvation, by removing an impediment which would otherwise have proved fatal. The early Christians seemed to go upon the principle, that as salvation was indiscriminately tendered to all, it must have been provided for all, and thus made *physically possible* to all where the gospel comes; otherwise, the Deity would be represented as tendering *that* to his creatures which was in no sense within their reach, and which they could not possibly attain, whatever might be their dispositions.

Among those who leaned strongly to what are called the doctrines of grace, the maxim was adopted, "*That Christ's death was sufficient for all, and efficient for the elect.*" By which they seem to have intended, that while Christ's death

* Vol. II. page 445.

opened the door for the salvation of all, so far as an expiatory sacrifice was concerned, it was *designed*, and by the sovereign grace of God made *effectual*, to the salvation of the elect. Their belief was, that Christ died *intentionally* to save those who were given to him in the covenant of redemption; but it does not appear that they supposed his death, considered merely as an *expiatory offering*, had any virtue in it, in relation to the elect, which it had not in relation to the rest of mankind. With respect to the *ultimate design* of this sacrifice, or the application which God would make of it, they doubtless supposed there was a difference; but in the *sacrifice itself*, or in its *immediate end*, the *demonstration of God's righteousness*, they could see no difference. In this view, it was precisely the same thing, as it stood related to the *elect* and to the *non-elect*. The sacrificial service was one and the same, appointed by the same authority, and for the same immediate purpose, and performed by the same glorious Personage, at the very same time. It wanted nothing to constitute it a true and perfect sacrifice for sin, as it stood related to the whole world; it was but this true and perfect sacrifice, as it stood related to the elect. Any other view would have overturned its sufficiency for all mankind; for it was not the sufficiency of Christ *to be* a sacrifice, but his sufficiency *as a sacrifice* for the whole world, that they maintained. And in perfect accordance with this, they held that this most perfect sacrifice was *efficient* for the elect. But how was it *efficient?* Not by its having in it any thing in regard to the *elect* which it had not in regard to others; for, *intrinsically* considered, it was the same to both, *a true and perfect sacrifice for sin;* but it was the purpose of God, in appointing it, that it should issue in the salvation of his chosen. This was the use he intended to make of it; nay, it was a part of the covenant of redemption, that

if the Mediator performed the sacrificial service required, he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. There was, therefore, an infallible connection between the death of Christ and the salvation of his people; and, of course, his death *was efficient* in procuring their salvation, it being the great medium through which the saving mercy of God flowed, and connected both by the purpose and promise of God with the bestowment of that mercy.

But even all this does not suppose that the death of Christ, considered simply as a *sacrifice for sin*, had any thing in it peculiar to the elect, or that in and of itself it did any thing for them which it did not do for the rest of mankind. The intention of God, as to its application, or the use he designed to make of it, is a thing perfectly distinct from the sacrifice itself, and so considered, as we believe, by the Church antecedent to the Reformation. In no other way, can we see, how their language is either *intelligible* or *consistent*.

Whether the *Reformers*, as they are called, were exactly of one mind on this subject, is not quite so certain. But that *Luther*, *Melancthon*, *Osiander*, *Brentius*, *Œcolampadius*, *Zwinglius*, and *Bucer* held the doctrine of a general atonement, there is no reason to doubt. We might infer it from their Confession at *Marpurge*, signed A. D. 1529, as the expressions they employ on this subject are of a comprehensive character, and best agree with this sentiment. From their subsequent writings, however, it is manifest that these men, and the German Reformers generally, embraced the doctrine of a *universal propitiation*. Thus, also, it was with their immediate successors, as the language of the Psalgrave Confession testifies. This Confession is entitled, "A Full Declaration of the Faith and Ceremonies professed in the dominions of the most illustrious and noble Prince Frederick V., Prince

Elector Palatine." It was translated by John Rolte, and published in London, A. D. 1614.

"Of the power and death of Christ, believe we," say these German Christians, "that the death of Christ (whilst he being not a bare man, but the Son of God, died,) *is a full, all-sufficient payment, not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world;* and that he by his death hath purchased not only forgiveness of sins, but also the new birth by the Holy Ghost, and lastly everlasting life. But we believe therewith, that no man shall be made partaker of such a benefit, but only he that believeth on him. For the Scripture is plain where it saith, '*He that believeth not shall be damned.*'"

It would be unnecessary to take up time to show that the Lutheran Divines, with scarcely a single exception, from that period to the present, have declared in favour of a universal atonement. It could scarcely be otherwise when we consider the great reverence in which they held their distinguished leader, who, on various occasions, expressed himself most decidedly upon this subject. To give but a single instance. While speaking of the blood of Christ, the inestimable price paid for our redemption, (in his commentary on 1 Peter i. 18,) he remarks that no understanding or reason of man can comprehend it: so valuable was it, "that a single drop of this most innocent and precious blood, was abundantly sufficient for the sins of the whole world. But it pleased the Father so largely to bestow his grace upon us, and to make such abundant provision for our salvation, that he willed that Christ his Son should pour forth all his blood, and at the same time to give this whole treasure to us."

We know what the opinion of the Church of England was, by the language of her thirty-first article, which is

in these words: "The offering of Christ once made, is that *perfect redemption, propitiation,* and *satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual;* and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone;" and with this agree the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, in the thirty-seventh question, which state that "Christ bore, both in body and mind, the weight of the wrath of God, for the sins of *all mankind,* to the end that by his sufferings as a propitiatory sacrifice, he might redeem our bodies and souls from eternal damnation, and acquire for us the grace of God, justification and eternal life."

We are well aware that many who have expounded this catechism, have adopted more limited views; and that toward the close of the sixteenth century, there was not a little zeal displayed, in some of the Reformed Churches, in Germany and Holland, and other parts of Europe, in defence of what was called particular redemption. Yet, in the Synod of Dort, there were many able advocates for the doctrine that *Christ died for all,* in the only sense in which it is contended for now, by that part of the Calvinistic school who plead for a *general propitiation.* The delegates from England, *Hesse,* and *Bremen* were explicit in their declaration to this effect. But all were not of the same mind; and, therefore, though they agreed upon a *form of words,* under which every man might take shelter, still it wears the appearance of a compromise, and is not sufficiently definite to satisfy the rigid inquirer.

But some may be curious to know in what light this subject was viewed by *Calvin,* a man who, from the *extent* of his *erudition,* and the *vigour* of his faculties, exerted a mighty influence over his contemporaries, and the generations which succeeded him. Seldom, indeed, has the

world seen such a man. Fearless as he was able, he examined every subject with care, and penetrated farther into the great doctrines of the gospel, probably, than any other divine of that or of preceding ages. What did *he* think of the doctrine of atonement? Did he consider it in the light of a universal provision for the whole human race, or did he suppose it restricted in its very nature to the elect? In his *Institutes*, which he wrote in early life, and which display an astonishing measure both of talent and research, some have supposed that he favoured the doctrine of a particular or limited atonement. The truth, however, is, so far as I can judge, that he carefully avoids committing himself on this point, and uses language on all occasions of such a general and indeterminate character, that it is not easy to discover what were his real sentiments. The probability is, that the subject had not then been much agitated, and that he thought it enough to keep to the language which was generally adopted by the Church. He often asserts that the death of Christ was a full and perfect sacrifice for sin—that it *takes away* sin—that he died for us—and that we are *purged by his blood*; but he does not teach that any man's sins are put away until he believes, but he plainly teaches the contrary. Having occasion to quote these words of the apostle, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," he remarks, "Here Paul celebrates the grace of God, because he has given the price of our redemption in the death of Christ; and then enjoins us to betake ourselves to his blood, that we may obtain righteousness, and may stand secure before the judgment of God." But why betake ourselves to his blood, that we may obtain righteousness or justification, if his death, considered simply as a sin-

offering, actually took away our sin, and reconciled us to God? For myself, I have no doubt that he considered the *sprinkling* of Christ's blood as essential to a *real* and *effective* propitiation as the shedding of it. *His blood shed* was the meritorious cause of our reconciliation, or the grand means by which it was effected; but this effect was never actually produced except in cases where his blood was sprinkled or applied, and that this blood is applied in no case antecedent to faith, and without faith. His doctrine, then, appears to me to be this: That Christ's death was the only full and perfect sacrifice for sin; that as such, it laid the foundation for God to be propitious to a world of sinners, even the whole human family; but that it actually reconciled him to none, so as to take away their sin and entitle them to life, till they repented and believed; but that to all such there is an *actual propitiation*, an *effective reconcilement* or at-one-ment, because by faith they lay their hands upon the head of the bleeding victim, and his blood is sprinkled upon them or applied to their souls. But whatever might have been his opinions in early life, his commentaries, which were the labours of his riper years, demonstrate in the most unequivocal manner that he received and taught the doctrine of a *general* or *universal* atonement. This is distinctly asserted by Dr. Watts, and several striking examples of his interpretation given. But having examined for myself, I am prepared to say that he takes the ground of a universal atonement in almost every controverted text on this subject in the New Testament. Hear him on Matthew xxvi. 28: "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for *many*, for the remission of sins." "Under the name of *many*," says Calvin, "he designates not a part of the world only, but the whole human race. For he opposes many to one, as if he should say he would be the Re-

deemer, not of one man, but would suffer death that he might liberate many from the guilt of the curse. Nor is it to be doubted that Christ, in addressing the few, designed to make his doctrine common to the many. Nevertheless, it is at the same time to be noted, that in distinctly addressing his disciples in Luke, he exhorts all the faithful to appropriate the shedding of his blood to their own use. While, therefore, we approach the sacred table, not only this general thought should come into the mind, *that the world is redeemed by Christ's blood*, but that every one for himself should reckon his own sins to be expiated." He expounds John iii. 16 in accordance with the same views. "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.*" By the *world*, according to him, we are to understand "*genus humanum*," the human race collectively, and not the elect as a distinct portion of the world. "God hath *affixed*," saith he, "a *mark of universality* to his words on this occasion, both that he might invite all promiscuously to the participation of life, and that he might cut off excuse to the unbelieving;" and this universality is indicated, he tells us, not only by the term *whosoever*, but by the term *world*. "For though God finds nothing in the world worthy of his favour, nevertheless he shows himself *propitious to the whole world*, since he calls all men without exception to *faith* in Christ, which is nothing else than an entrance into life."

His remarks on 1 Corinthians viii. 11, 12, are still more decisive. "And through thy knowledge shall thy *weak brother perish for whom Christ died.*" Here the question is, what is meant by the weak brother *perishing?* Calvin's paraphrase is, "If the soul of every weak person was the purchase of the blood of Christ, he that for the sake of a little meat plunges his *brother again into death* who was

redeemed by Christ, shows at how mean a rate he esteems the blood of Christ." His observations on Hebrews x. 26, are of the same decisive character. Paul declares "*that if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.*" This Calvin interpreted of those who openly apostatize from the truth and renounce their Christian profession—and to such, he says, there is no more a *sacrifice* for sins, because they have departed from the death of Christ and treated it with sacrilegious contempt—but to sinners of any other description, even to lapsed Christians, "Christ daily offers himself, so that no other sacrifice need to be sought for the expiation of their sins."

It is obvious that Calvin considered *apostates* as standing in a different relation to the death of Christ from what they once did, and different from that of other sinners under the dispensation of the gospel. That *once* his death might be regarded as a *sacrifice* for sin, available for them, but now it was otherwise; having despised him and being rejected of God, there remained to them neither this sacrifice nor any other, but only a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall consume the adversaries.

Again, on 1 John ii. 2, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." "Here," says Calvin, "a question is raised, how the sins of the whole world were atoned for? Some have said *that Christ suffered for the whole world sufficiently, but for the elect alone efficaciously. This is the common solution of the schools*, and though I confess *this is a truth*, yet I do not think it agrees to this place."

See also on 2 Peter ii. 1, "There shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying *the Lord that bought them*, and bring upon

themselves swift destruction." Upon this, Calvin remarks, "Though Christ is denied in various ways, yet, in my opinion, Peter means the same thing here that Jude expresses, namely, that the grace of God is turned into lasciviousness. For Christ has redeemed us that he might have a people free from the defilements of the world, and devoted to holiness and innocence. Whoever, therefore, shake off the yoke and throw themselves into all licentiousness, are justly said to deny Christ, by whom they *were redeemed.*"

To the same purpose are his remarks on Jude, verse fourth: "Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." "His meaning is," says Calvin, "that Christ is really denied when those who *were redeemed by his blood* again enslave themselves to the devil, and as far as in them lies, make that incomparable price vain and ineffectual."

It is but candid, however, to allow that in some passages where the word *all* is brought into question, this writer supposes that it signifies all of *every kind*, or all sorts, rather than all, *every one.* But this he might easily do and consistently maintain as the doctrine of the New Testament, that the death of Christ was a full and perfect sacrifice for the sins of all men absolutely. This doctrine he most certainly did maintain, as several of the extracts from his writings now presented clearly evince. We need not be afraid, therefore, that our *Calvinism* will be essentially marred by holding the doctrine of a *general propitiation*, unless we wish to be more Calvinistic than John Calvin himself. But as we should call no man master, upon earth, but examine for ourselves, and take our opinions from the living oracles, let us hear what the Scriptures say upon this subject.

To facilitate our inquiries, I propose to consider the truth of the following *positions:*

First. That the death of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin.

Second. That though his death was of *vicarious import*, as were the ancient sin-offerings, yet it was not *strictly* vicarious.

Third. That this sacrifice bore such a relation to the *sins of men*, that a way was thereby opened for the restoration of the whole human family to the favour of God.

Should these propositions turn out to be true, we shall be at no loss how to answer the question which stands at the head of this lecture.

First. As to the first position, *that Christ's death was a true and proper sacrifice for sin*, there will be no dispute, as this is common ground to all Calvinists, and to all, indeed, who do not virtually give up the doctrine of atonement. Still it may be well to remark that the language of Scripture, on this subject, is clear and precise. Christ is called *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.* He is said *to have given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God.* It is affirmed *that he needed not, like the high priests under the law, to offer up sacrifice daily, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people; for this he did once when he offered up himself.* He is expressly called *the propitiation for our sins*, and God is said to have sent him into the world for the purpose of *making propitiation*, and of making it by his death. The whole system of Jewish sacrifices, as well as Patriarchal, were but types of his one great sacrifice when he offered up himself, and demonstrate his death to be a true and proper *expiatory offering.* But this is a point on all hands conceded.

Second. Was his death, then, of *vicarious import* simply? or was it strictly *vicarious?*

That it was of *vicarious import* cannot reasonably be

denied, if we compare it with the legal sacrifices, or attend to the express language of Scripture on the subject.

The victims under the law were vicarious offerings; they suffered in the room and stead of the offerer, and thus far there was a *transfer*, not of *sin* or *guilt*, strictly speaking, but of its *penal effects;* suffering and death, only, were transferred, and this is what is meant by putting the iniquities of the sinner upon the head of the victim, and of the victim's bearing the iniquities of the sinner.

To suppose a literal transfer, either of *sin* or of *punishment*, would be to suppose something which is entirely unauthorized by the language of Scripture, and at the same time to involve the absurdity of making a man and even a beast guilty by proxy. *Sin, guilt, ill-desert* are in the very nature of things *personal;* and *punishment* presupposes guilt, and guilt in the subject; neither the one nor the other is properly transferable. Or, to use the language of Magee: "*Guilt* and *punishment* cannot be conceived but with reference to *consciousness*, which cannot be transferred."

While we would maintain, therefore, that the sufferings of Christ were of *vicarious import*, because he suffered in the room of sinners, and bore the indications of Divine wrath for their sakes, we cannot subscribe to the opinion that they were *strictly vicarious*, if by this is meant that the *sins* of those for whom he suffered, their *personal desert* and *their punishment*, were literally transferred to him. We maintain the doctrine of substitution, but not such a substitution as implies a transfer of character, and consequently of *desert* and *punishment.* This we think to be impossible; and *unnecessary*, if not impossible. It was enough that there should be a transfer of *sufferings*,

and *these*, not exactly in *kind*, *degree*, or *duration*, but in all their circumstances amounting to a full equivalent in their moral effect upon the government of God. We hold that Jesus died in the room of the guilty; that though innocent himself, he *was made sin for us*, or treated as a sinner on our account, and in our stead; that the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all; and that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, by suffering what was a full equivalent to the punishment due to our offences. But this, we think, is all the substitution which the Scriptures teach, all that the nature of things will admit, and all that was *necessary* to effect the same moral ends in the government of God which would have been effected by inflicting on the transgressor the penal sanctions of his law. This brings us to our third position.

Third. That the sacrifice of Christ bore such a relation to the *sins of men*—that a way was thereby opened for the restoration of the whole human family to the favour of God.

I say the *sins of men*, for it does not appear that his sacrifice bore any specific relation to the sins of the rebel angels. For them no sacrifice was appointed, but justice seized at once upon its victims, and thrust them down to hell, where they are reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. And but for a sacrifice, which did honour to the Divine Law, and rendered it consistent for a holy God to treat with rebellious man, it is not easy to see why the arm of justice was not uplifted to avenge its insulted rights, in the immediate and interminable punishment of our apostate race. Be this, however, as it may, it is an undeniable fact, that Jesus took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, and was in all things made like unto his brethren of the human family. In that very nature in

which the law of God had been broken and dishonoured, did Jesus appear to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. But this, it will be said, it behooved him to do, if he were to expiate the sins of his people only, and if his death had not the remotest reference to the sins of the finally lost. Granted: but must it not also be allowed, that if he had intended to make provision for the whole human family by pouring out his blood, it behooved him neither to be nor to do any thing more than he actually did? As a Person of infinite dignity, he accomplished that *very service* in that *very nature*, and in all *those circumstances* of *touching interest*, which alone would have been requisite had he intended to make atonement for the whole world absolutely. This is so obvious as generally to be admitted. It is allowed on all hands, that he atoned for all sorts of persons, of all nations and all ages of the world; and that the sacrifice he offered was of sufficient value to have redeemed the whole human race. But how did he atone for any, but by obeying the law in *that very nature* in which they had disobeyed it, and by suffering in that *very nature*, a moral equivalent to *the evil* which they had deserved to suffer, as the just award of the same righteous law? But this nature, let it be remembered, is the common nature of man, and if rendering a service in *this nature* would amount to an atonement for *one*, why not for *another*, and *another*, until the whole were included? That such might be the case, it is easy to see; and that such, in fact, was the case, it would be very natural to presume.

The leading circumstance which constitutes the connection between Christ and those for whom his sacrifice is available, is that he obeyed the law in their nature, and in the same nature suffered its penalty, or that which was equivalent. All had reproached or dishonoured God alike, by

trampling upon the authority of his law; Christ assumes their nature, and by his obedience and sufferings magnifies the law and makes it honourable. They with one voice had proclaimed that the law was not good, nor God worthy to be obeyed. Christ reverses this statement, and proclaims in the ears of the universe the purity of God's character, and the excellence and importance of his law. Nay, he condemns sin, vindicates God's holiness, and shows his unalterable determination to uphold the authority of his government; since, in the very expedient he has adopted for dispensing mercy, he will not forgive sin, without an adequate satisfaction to the right of his injured majesty, considered as the moral head of the universe. All this Christ did in man's nature, and with reference to the sins of men, and more than this he need not do, and could not do, by offering himself a sacrifice for sin. What is there, let me ask, in the nature and circumstances of this great sacrifice, which should limit its availableness to a *part* of the human race? Did it not bear sufficiently upon the conduct of the *whole?* Did it not condemn sin—all sin—the sin of one man as much as the sin of another? Did it not vindicate the Divine holiness, and the purity and excellence of that law which man had broken? Did it not evince God's determination to sustain the authority of that law, while it exhibited his boundless compassion toward a world of rebels? What more would we have in it, or what other or greater moral influence would we have it exert, had it been designed as a sacrifice of expiation for the whole human family? As for ourse.ves, we regard the whole scheme of atonement in the light of a remedial law; that it was adapted to counteract the ruins of the fall—and that in its very nature it contained a provision coextensive with those ruins—though in its application, for wise and holy purposes, an

important difference will be made. But here we shall be told, that if we have not left out of our statement, we have not sufficiently exhibited *one* all-controlling circumstance, to wit, the *actual substitution* of Christ for, and in behalf of, those for whom he suffered; that to constitute his sufferings an *available sacrifice*, it was necessary not only that he should die in the *nature*, but in the *room* of sinners; and that he might die in their *nature* without dying in their *stead*.

Our reply is, that we consider the death of Christ as a vicarious sacrifice, and offered in behalf of all men; because, from the very nature of the case, it could scarcely be otherwise, he dying in their nature, and in circumstances equally fitted to make him the substitute of all. He did and suffered what he must have done, had he been the substitute of all, and so far as we can discern, nothing less or more; what he did and suffered bore the same relation to sin and holiness, to the law and government of God, as it would have done, had he offered himself for all; nay, we consider it impossible that he should, by his obedience and death, have *condemned sin* and *magnified the law*, and this in man's nature, without doing it with reference to every man's sin, and the dishonour which every man had cast upon the law. His sacrificial service was *open* and *public*, performed in the face of the universe, and gave out a testimony which was heard through all worlds, and a testimony which bore as strongly upon one man's sin as another's, and upon the righteousness of God, in his condemnation. Nay, whatever was the language of this solemn transaction concerning God or man, equally respected all men, and God in relation to all. We could not doubt, therefore, that so far as Christ was the substitute of any man, he was the substitute of all men, were we to look only at the nature of his sacrifice, and the purposes it was immediately de-

signed to answer in the moral administration of God. But the Bible has not left us to general principles here; it has furnished us with facts and declarations upon the subject which we think ought for ever to put this matter to rest.

Look a moment at the doctrine of sacrifice taught from the beginning, but with more explicitness under the dispensation of Moses. For certain transgressions, and some of them of a moral character, every sinner among the Israelites was required to bring a victim, over whose head he was to confess his sin. This victim was afterward to be slain, and offered by the priest as a sin-offering unto the Lord, for the purpose of making an atonement for the soul. The life of the victim was accepted for the life of the sinner, the victim being always regarded as his *substitute.* Where the service was performed, agreeably to God's appointment, an atonement was made, and sin forgiven, so far, at least, as to release the sinner from the penalties and disabilities incurred under the Jewish law. But the victims slain on these occasions were *types* of *Christ*, a nobler victim hereafter to come into the world. This, so far as I know, is universally admitted. But what follows? Why, most certainly, unless the Jewish law was deceptive, the type being the substitute of the sinner, the antitype must be his substitute also; for it looked to him, and derived all its significancy and efficacy from him. A typical offering would be but a mere mockery of the Divine justice and holiness, considered in any other light than as a prefiguration of the glorious Antitype. Of necessity, therefore, they must be regarded as closely conjoined. Admit, then, that every man in the Jewish nation, good or bad, elect or non-elect, when he brought his sin or trespass offering to the Lord, was taught, by the very nature of the institution, that his *offering* or *victim* was his substitute, could he avoid the conclusion that a greater and infinitely more

precious victim was his substitute also? Could he understand the nature of this sacrificial service, without perceiving that the type pointed to the *Antitype*, and that, by the appointment of God, both stood in the same relation to him, as a gracious medium through which pardon was to be obtained, and the Divine favour secured?

Now let me ask, whether it is reasonable to suppose that such a doctrine as this should be held forth in the Jewish sacrifices, if, in truth and in fact, Christ is the appointed substitute for the elect only? I know it is sometimes said, that the Jewish people were a typical nation, and that they properly prefigured the true Church of God, or the whole body of the elect, and, therefore, that their sacrifices for themselves typified Christ's sacrifice for his people. But this by no means avoids the difficulty. The Jewish sacrifices had a language which was distinct and appropriate, and that language was, that every man's victim brought by God's appointment, was a vicarious offering, accepted in behalf of the guilty offerer; that this offering was a type of Christ, and of his great sacrifice, to be made once in the end of the world; and consequently that Christ, thus prefigured, stood in the same relation to the offerer as did the prefiguring victim, to wit, as his substitute, and the only piacular sacrifice on which his faith ought ultimately to rest. This, we have no doubt, is the true state of the case. But to show how perfectly futile the attempt to escape from this argument is, by resorting to the notion that the Jewish nation typified the Church, let us look back to the patriarchal ages, where no such refuge will be found.

It is the common belief of Christians, supported by the clear indications of Holy Writ, that sacrifices were instituted by God immediately after the fall; that these sacrifices were expiatory, resembling, in all important particu-

lars, the sin-offerings under the law. But if these early sacrifices were of God's appointment, it will not be doubted that they were obligatory upon the whole human family during the patriarchal ages, nor that they were *typical*, bearing the same relation to the promised seed of the woman, and to *his sacrifice*, which the Mosaic sacrifices afterward bore. What then do we find in this ancient sacrificial service? Why that God required every man, as he did Cain and Abel, to bring their victims, at the appointed time, and sacrifice them at his altars. Were these victims, then, the substitutes of the offerers, life being accepted for life? There is no room to doubt. Did these victims typify the Saviour, and his sacrifice of expiation? Most certainly they did, or they were an unmeaning and unprofitable service. But if typical of Christ, and the substitutes of the *offerers*, then Christ himself was exhibited as the substitute of the offerers, unless you break up the connection between type and antitype. To him these offerings pointed, and the worshippers were directed, through the medium of these emblems, to the great sacrifice which he was to accomplish, when he should come to break the head of the serpent, and procure the means of deliverance to a ruined world.

Here was instruction which God himself imparted, and it exhibits, with the light of a sunbeam, two important facts, to wit, that the *victims* employed in animal sacrifice were the appointed substitutes of their respective offerers, and that, being types of Christ, they show him to be the substitute of the offerers also. Now, as the rite of sacrifice was universal—instituted for the whole family of man—how can we escape the conclusion, that a foundation was laid for this universality, by appointing the Mediator to appear in human nature, and to offer a sacrifice in behalf of the whole human family? Allow a substitu-

tion thus universal, and all appears plain; say, with the apostle, that Christ is a Mediator between *God* and *men*, and that he, by the grace of God, tasted death for *every man;* give these expressions their full and unrestricted import, and there is no difficulty in allowing that the ancient victims were the real substitutes of those who offered them, and at the same time types of the Lord Jesus, who, in his sacrificial character, sustained an important relation to the entire family of man. But deny a substitution thus universal, and you are plunged into impenetrable darkness.

We have dwelt the longer on this point, because it is vital to the controversy. If Christ were a substitute for all men, or died in the room of all, then it cannot be denied that his sacrifice bore such a relation to the sins of men, that a way was thereby opened for the restoration of the whole human race to the favour of God. And on the other hand, if no substitution of this universal character existed, I do not see but that we must restrict the availableness of Christ's death to the elect only. But our brethren of the opposite school will probably rejoin: "If Christ died in the room of all, why are not all saved? And again, if he died *for*, or in reference to all, why the *specialty* sometimes indicated in regard to the object of his death? He is said to lay down his life for his sheep, for his friends, for the Church."

The first of these inquiries we answer by saying, that if Christ did die for all, so as to make his death available to their salvation, it will not follow as a consequence that all will actually be saved; and as to the indication of *specialty* in regard to the object of Christ's death, such as that he died for his sheep, his Church, his friends, these are all explained by a reference to the *ultimate* object of his death. Doubtless, he died with an intention of

saving those who were given him in the covenant of redemption; they were the seed to serve him, promised as a reward for his agony and bloody sweat, and he looked to their salvation as the fruit of his sufferings, and as the joy set before him. But such an ultimate design of his death, which included the application which should be made of it by the sovereign and discriminating grace of God, hinders not the availableness of his sacrifice in relation to all, nor throws the slightest suspicion upon the doctrine which we have advocated in this lecture. Because he died with the declared design of saving his people, does it follow that he had no other design? Because this was an ultimate end sought in his death, is it a just consequence that he could have had no other end, either immediate or ultimate? Doubtless, whatever follows as the proper result of his atoning sacrifice, he sought more immediately or remotely as an end of his undertaking in this infinitely solemn and amazing tragedy.

But we have not done with this article; *that the sacrifice of Christ stood in such a relation to the sins of men, as to open a way for the salvation of all.*

We argue this from the parable of the marriage supper, where it is expressly said, *all things are ready*, and *ready* too, for those who, it seems, in the event never came. * * * We argue it from the indefinite tender of salvation made to all men where the gospel comes. To us, no maxim appears more certain, *than that a salvation offered, implies a salvation provided;* for God will not tantalize his creatures by tendering them that which is not in his hand to bestow. We argue it from the declared purpose of God in sending his Son into the world, and which he has expressed in such a manner as to leave no reasonable doubt that provision is made for all. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

By the *world* here, must be intended either the chosen vessels of mercy, sometimes called the elect world,—or the *world* of mankind at large, without discrimination. Suppose we interpret it of the *elect world.* Then the sentiment will run thus: God so loved the *elect world*, that *whosoever* of the *elect world* shall believe in him, &c.

But such language is absurd upon the very face of it, and cannot be supposed to proceed from the lips of unerring wisdom. Besides, what follows fixes the sense, and demands a different interpretation. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him *might be* saved." And again, "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." It is utterly contrary to the *usus loquendi,* to interpret the phrase, *the world* of God's chosen people. It signifies often, mankind at large; sometimes the wicked part of mankind, as distinguished from God's people; and not unfrequently the earth itself, with all that pertains to it. (Nor is it doubted that it is sometimes taken for a *part* of mankind, instead of the whole, as when it is said, "*the world is gone after him.*") But it is nowhere used, that we have discovered, for the *elect,* the *Church,* or God's *redeemed ones,* in distinction from others. Interpret this passage, then, according to its most obvious signification, and what do we find but a declaration of God's love to the human race collectively in the gift of his Son, which gift involved in it the means of their salvation. He sent his Son that *they might be saved,* not that they should infallibly be saved. His love was expressed in providing the *means,* and their destiny he has made to turn upon the use which they shall make of this inestimable provision of his mercy.

And hence Christ himself says in the words immediately following: "He that believeth not is condemned already; *because* he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Not because a way of salvation was not provided through means of this Son, (for *that* he had asserted in a verse or two preceding,) but because he had not believed in the name of the only begotten Son, but despised and rejected him.

Here he assigns the true and only cause of condemnation to sinners under the light of the gospel, namely, their *unbelief*. But how could unbelief be the *cause*, at least the principal cause, if no sacrifice has been offered for them, and no means of salvation provided? There would then be another reason for their condemnation, a reason far deeper and more controlling, to wit, *no atonement*, nor the means of one.

We call not your attention to the universal terms so often employed upon this subject, as that Christ is the *Saviour of all men*, that he tasted *death for every man*, and *gave himself a ransom for all*, &c., not because we suppose these terms ought not to be understood in the widest sense of universality, but because this ground has been trodden over by the parties in this controversy. We ask you to consider some passages which we think far more decisive. Look at Hebrews x. 26, 27: "For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." It is agreed, on all hands, that the apostle here describes such as openly and deliberately apostatize from the truth, and set themselves vigorously to oppose Christianity—men who are given up of God, and irrevocably sealed over to destruction, as a just judgment for their wicked-

ness. Now, with respect to these men he said, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.* The original is peculiarly strong and determinate. Οὐκ ἔτι περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἀπολείπεται θυσία—a sacrifice for sin no more, or no longer *remains.* What does this imply, but that antecedent to this apostasy, there was a sacrifice which might have availed to take away their sins? But now there is none. They are left without hope, because cut off, by the just judgment of God, from any connection with the only sacrifice which can take away sin. They have trampled under foot the blood of the covenant; and now, instead of pleading for mercy, it pleads for vengeance. But what propriety in this statement, if the blood of Christ was never an available sacrifice for them, and they never stood in any other relation to it than the apostate angels—it having, in no sense, ever been shed for them? Surely, it must be strange language, to say there remaineth no more a sacrifice to those for whom there never was a sacrifice. If this passage stood alone, on the subject before us, I should consider it as settling the question for ever, that the death of Christ bore such a relation to the sins of men, as to open a way for the restoration of the whole human family to the favour of God. For, if it bore such a relation to any one soul who is finally lost, with what reason could it be denied with respect to others?

Look, again, at 1 Cor. viii. 11: "And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, *for whom Christ died.*" But how shall he *perish?* Why, by being emboldened to eat those things which are offered unto idols, as the apostle teaches us in the preceding verse, he shall be guilty of renouncing the living and true God, or which is equally fatal, confounding him with idols. The apostle does not say he shall be injured, greatly injured, but he shall *perish;* using the very same word which Christ does,

when he says that God gave his only begotten Son, that men *need not perish*, but have everlasting life; and the same word which Jude uses, when he speaks of those who *perished* in the *gainsaying of Core*. It is perfectly idle to attempt to explain away the solemn and awful import of this word; and yet if it be allowed its proper signification —if to *perish* is to lose one's soul—then men may be *lost* for whom Christ died; which concludes unanswerably in favour of our doctrine, that Christ died for all, or that his sacrifice bore a solemn and important relation to all.

We draw the same conclusion from 2 Peter ii. 1, where the apostle speaks of some who privily bring in damnable heresies, *denying the Lord that bought them*, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. You have already heard the opinion of Calvin upon this text. And though our brethren of another school have often nibbled at it, and applied to it the various arts of criticism, still it stands as firm as the pillars of Hercules against the sentiment that Christ died for his people only.

If wicked men deny the Lord that bought them, doubtless they were *bought*, and bought by the price of that blood which alone is an adequate ransom for the soul.

But we are told that the *Lord* that bought them was not Jesus Christ, and of course, that they were not bought with his blood. Who, then, was this *Lord*, and how did he buy these wicked men? "Why, the Lord is God the Father, the Sovereign Ruler of the world, and he bought these men as Jehovah bought the Israelites, when he delivered them from the bondage of Egypt." But when was this interpretation first introduced? Can it be found in any of the ancient scholiasts or glossaries? No. Its modern date shows its origin; that it has been resorted to, not from its obvious agreement with the words, but from the

necessity of the case. It has been seen that the old interpretation would be fatal to a certain theory; the words of the apostle, therefore, must speak something else than what the Church from the beginning has supposed them to speak.

But let us hear the defence of this novel interpretation. The word in the original, translated Lord, is δεσπότης, and not Κυριος, the more common appellation of Jesus Christ. This word, it is said, signifies Supreme Ruler, and is thus applied to God in several places in the New Testament. True; but is it not also applied to Christ, and even to men who sustain the relation of *master* to others as their servants? Whom does the apostle mean by δεσπότης in 2 Tim. ii. 21, where he says, "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the *master's* use?" Whom does Jude mean by δεσπότης in a passage strikingly parallel with that under consideration, where he speaks of "certain men crept in unawares, who were of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and *denying the only Lord God, even our Lord Jesus Christ,*" as it should be rendered. The best lexicographers tells us that this word has the force of *dominus* among the Latins, and may be applied to God as the Supreme Ruler, to Jesus Christ as the great Head of his Church, or to any head or master of a family. Nothing is therefore more futile than the attempt to escape the obvious construction of this passage, by a criticism upon the word δεσπότης, which in this very place, Schleusner tells us, is applied to Jesus Christ. But if God, the Supreme Ruler of the world, is here designated by δεσπότης, I should like to know a little more definitely *how* he has bought these wicked men, who privily bring in damnable heresies? Will you say he delivered them from the bondage of corruption? This neither the

text nor the context declares. But if it were so, what was the price which he paid for their deliverance? When he bought the Israelites, he paid a price for them, and a heavy price it was; he gave Egypt for them—Ethiopia and Sheba for a ransom. Was there any thing to correspond with this, when he bought the false prophets and false teachers spoken of in this text? According to our judgment, there was never a harder shift to blunt the edge of plain and pointed Scripture testimony. But we need not wonder, because as long as this text stands in the Bible, unperverted, it is entirely fatal to that scheme which contends that Jesus Christ was a sacrifice for the elect only.

Let me draw your attention to a single remark more. This important passage has always been considered as parallel with that in Jude, already mentioned. There is a striking resemblance in all the important points of character, attributed to these wicked men by the two sacred writers, and an equally striking analogy in their doom. But what did they do, besides turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and leading a life of brutal sensuality? What did they do which in a peculiar manner irrevocably sealed them to perdition? Why, they denied the δεσποτης, and by δεσπότης Jude manifestly intends the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE HIDING-PLACE.

HAIL, Sov'reign love, that first began
The scheme to rescue fallen man!
Hail, matchless, free, eternal grace,
That gave my soul *a hiding-place.*

Against the God who rules the sky
I fought with hands uplifted high;
Despised the offers of his grace,
Too proud to seek *a hiding-place.*

Vindictive justice stood in view:
To Sinai's fiery mount I flew;
But justice cried with frowning face—
"This mountain is *no hiding-place.*"

But lo! a heavenly voice is heard—
Mercy's bright angel then appear'd;
Who led me on a pleasing pace,
To Jesus Christ, *my hiding-place.*

On him Almighty vengeance fell,
Which must have sunk a world to hell:
He bore it for our guilty race,
And now, *He is my hiding-place.*

BREWER.

THE

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

THE doctrine of the infallible perseverance of the saints is not, in my opinion, a *fundamental* doctrine of the gospel. Of course, people may hold different sentiments respecting it, and be saved; yet I cannot but regard it as a *very important* doctrine, and one which is clearly and strongly taught in the word of God—one which is, in a measure, essential to Christian *comfort*, and greatly conducive to the *glory* of God.

In offering a few remarks on it, the design of the writer is not to awaken controversy, or to condemn those Christians who do not believe it. He is far from doubting the *piety* of those individuals and churches who hold views on the point different from those which this tract is intended to exhibit. Nay, he is persuaded that in those churches there are some of the most consistent Christians on earth, and, perhaps, as many real saints as in our own, or any other section of the church. His aim, is simply to state the ground on which the doctrine of our church is built, and to answer the objections which are usually urged against it.

A mere *outline* of the argument, however, is all that is proposed. And if a large space should be allotted to the *objections* which are to be noticed, or if some of these should be regarded as trivial, let it be remembered that great stress is often laid on them, and that to pass them by unnoticed might be construed as inability to remove them. A free use of *italics* has been indulged, on account of the

brevity of the argument, to show to the most careless reader the hinge on which the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians turns. I will

I. State and explain the DOCTRINE;

II. Offer some ARGUMENTS in proof of it; and,

III. Notice some OBJECTIONS.

A few words will *explain* what is meant by the expression, "the perseverance of the saints."

1. By a "saint" is not meant a *perfectly holy person*, for there is not such a one on earth. Nor, running to the other extreme, do we consider every *awakened* and *convicted* sinner a saint, for many are alarmed, excited, and partially reformed, who are never thoroughly converted. Nor do we mean *mere professional* Christianity, for outward profession often covers hearts at enmity with God. But by a *saint* is understood *a real Christian*—one who has been *born again*, John iii. 7—one who has become *a new creature*, 2 Cor. v. 17; or, to use a favourite expression of our opponents, one who has "been soundly and thoroughly converted." It is *certain* that such a person will not perish.

2. When we say that a saint will not fall away and be lost, we do not mean that this arises from any thing *in the Christian himself*, but from the *immutability* of the *purpose* and *promise* of God. If left to himself, the Christian would fall in a moment; and hence arises the propriety of those cautions, exhortations, and warnings against falling, which abound in the word of God.

3. When we say a Christian will not *fall from grace*, we do not mean that it is impossible to lose *many degrees of grace*, or to be backsliders to a considerable extent; for this we admit is a frequent occurrence; but that such will not fall *entirely away*, so as to lose *all* grace and *perish* eternally. Dr. Emmons and some other New England divines admit a *total*, though they deny a *final* falling from grace. Our church, in my opinion, very properly denies both; but the latter is the more important of the two, and it is to this I shall principally direct attention.

Our doctrine, therefore, is,

"*That no real Christian—no one who has been truly regenerated and made a new creature in Christ Jesus*, WILL EVER BE SUFFERED TO PERISH ETERNALLY."

ARGUMENTS FOR PERSEVERANCE.

My first arguments shall be founded on the *general principles* of the gospel; after which express passages of Scripture shall be adduced.

I. The doctrine of *Election* proves perseverance. I shall not here enter fully into this most unpopular subject, but shall content myself with observing that *saints* are elected unto salvation—of course to *perseverance*. 2 Thess. ii. 13: "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*" "God hath *chosen*,"—here is election—"chosen *from the beginning*,"—here is the *eternity* of that election,—"chosen to *salvation*,"—here is the *end* of that election—"*through sanctification* and *belief of the truth*,"—here is *perseverance* in grace. See, also, Eph. i. 4–12, 1 Pet. i. 1–4: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy," &c.; "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,"—"to an inheritance incorruptible," &c. Saints, therefore, are *chosen* or *elected* to salvation. The only question is, whether this election *secures* salvation? That it does, is evident from two considerations.

1. The elect can *never be deceived or led fatally astray*. Matt. xxiv. 24: "Insomuch that, if *it were possible*, they should deceive the very elect." Does not this teach that it is *impossible* to "deceive" them, so as to ruin them? This *impossibility* arises, however, not from the *wisdom* of Christians, but from the *immutable purpose* of God to bring them to salvation.

2. Because at the day of judgment *nothing shall be laid to their charge*. Rom. viii. 33: "*Who* shall lay *any thing* to the charge of God's elect?" The apostle challenges any one to name an *accuser*, or a *charge*, which should appear against them. Now, the apostles, in the texts I have quoted, address all *saints* as *elected*, and, of course, teach that all saints will *persevere*.

II. The doctrine of *Efficacious Grace* proves perseverance.

The manner in which a man becomes a Christian makes it probable that when once converted, he will never cease to be a Christian. His conversion is not *of himself:* if it were, he might *of himself* go back again; but his conversion is an act of *Almighty power* and *sovereign grace.* Eph. i. 18, 19, and ii. 4, 8. The doctrine of the Bible is that all mankind are by nature at *enmity* with God, Rom. vii. 6, 7; that, in order to be Christians, we must be *born again*, John iii. 7; that those who are born, are born not of the will of *man*, nor of the will of the *flesh*, but of *God*, John i. 13; that those who are willing to serve him become willing in consequence of his *power*, Ps. cx. 3, (and hence our opponents so often call on God to "come down with *power;*") that those who are called are called not of *works*, but of *grace* given in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2 Tim. 1. 9.

From all which we are taught that the cause of a sinner's coming to Christ is not in himself, but *wholly in God.* Now, if God glorifies his power and grace in thus bringing a sinner to himself, what good reason can be assigned for his ever casting him off? The sinner can never be *worse* than he was when he was called; and, if God *loved* him then, why should he ever after *change* and hate him?

I will illustrate my argument by a single text, John vi. 44: "*No man can come unto me, except the Father which has sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day.*"

Observe, 1. This is a universal proposition, applying to *every man*,—"*No man* can come," &c. 2. The cause of the sinner's coming to Christ is not *in himself.* He never *will* come, unless converted by *Divine influence.* 3. When he does come, his conversion is to be attributed not to himself, but to God alone—to the "drawing of the Father." 4. What shall become of him when he is thus *drawn* and has come to Christ? Shall he be suffered to go back? or shall he be saved? Our Lord answers the question, "*I will raise him up at the last day.*" This is certainly a *promise*, and not a *curse*, and therefore the *resurrection* is used in a good sense for a resurrection to *life.* As the term "life" in the New Testament does not mean mere *existence*, but *happiness*, so the "*resurrection*" generally means the

resurrection of the righteous. Therefore Paul was so anxious to "attain unto the *resurrection* of the dead." Phil. iii. 11.

Our Lord, therefore, promises, in this text, that he *will grant eternal salvation* to those who are thus drawn to him by the Father. And, as *all saints* are thus drawn, it is evident they will *persevere* till "the last day."

III. The *nature of the Covenant of Grace*, and the *character of our Surety*. From the 5th chapter of Romans, it is evident God hath made *two covenants* with man, the first with *Adam*, for himself and all his posterity; the second with *Christ*, for himself and all his people.

The design of the *second* covenant was to remedy the *defects* of the *first*. Heb. viii. 6–13.

Our *surety* in the first covenant was frail and fallible; our *surety* in the present, *infallible*. Under the first covenant the *conditions were never performed, and the blessings were lost*. Had Adam fulfilled the conditions, he would have been confirmed and all his posterity with him in happiness for ever. But our second surety *has fulfilled the conditions* and secured the blessings of the covenant for himself and all his people. He has been admitted into heaven, and there can be no doubt his people will all be admitted also. If the atonement was *yet* to be offered; if the righteousness by which they are to be justified was *yet* to be provided; if the conditions of the covenant were *yet* to be fulfilled; if salvation depended on *their* faithfulness,—there would, indeed, be great uncertainty as to the salvation of saints. But since our surety has performed all the conditions, the Father will not break his covenant with the Son by refusing to save every individual of his people. Ps. lxxxix. 34.

In short, the whole comes to this:—your salvation, O Christian, depends on *Christ's* faithfulness, or on *your* faithfulness, or on *both*. If it depends on *your* faithfulness, you are lost; if on Christ's, you are *safe*, for "he is faithful who has promised." If he has promised to be faithful to you *only so long as you are faithful to* him, then the whole depends on *your* faithfulness at last! And in this case you are worse off than before the fall, for then you had a surety in Adam who was *perfect*, and not likely to fall; but

now you have *yourself* for a surety, and are *sure* to come short and perish.

But, if *Christ* be the surety of saints, they are certain to *persevere.*

Thus far I have argued from the general principles of the gospel, because, as *they* are admitted, they will have their force in proving the doctrine of perseverance. But, if I were arguing with an "Arminian," I would *waive* all these principles, which he would either wholly or in part deny, and would argue with him from the following *plain passages of Scripture.* ☞ Please refer to the Bible for the texts in full.

IV. Because *none become saints but those who have been previously* GIVEN *to Christ, and such can never be lost.* John vi. 37, 39: "*All* that the Father *giveth* me *shall come to me;* and him that cometh unto me *I will in no wise cast out.* This is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of *all* which he hath *given* me I should *lose nothing,* but should raise it up at the last day." Observe the terms "*given*" to Christ—"*coming*" to Christ—"in no wise cast out"—and "*lose nothing*"—all cover precisely the *same extent.* So that if one who was *given* to Christ should not *come* to Christ, or one who came should be *cast out or lost,* the whole would be falsified. ☞ See the text.

Suppose, for instance, the number given to Christ be a *thousand millions,* (though we hope ten thousand times that number will be saved,) then it is evident,

1. *Every individual* of these thousand millions given to Christ, *shall come* to Christ, or become a Christian. Can you doubt? Suppose, then, *one* of them should be overlooked, and should not come to Christ, do you not perceive the declaration would be *false*—for "*all*" who were given to Christ would not have come to him! It is absolutely *certain,* therefore, *all will come* to Christ. Suppose them come. Shall they *persevere?* Yes, for

2. Not one of these thousand millions can be *cast out* or *lost,* without breaking this *absolute promise* of Christ. Suppose only *one* individual, after coming to Christ, should *on some wise* be cast out—only one—would not this break the promise as effectually as though a *million* were cast out! *This single text, therefore, secures the infallible per-*

severance of every saint that ever lived, or ever will live, on earth.

"Ah, but," says an objector, "though *Christ* will not cast him out, he may *cast himself out.*" Ans. Would he not then be *lost?* But Christ says, "I should *lose nothing,*" and adds the positive promise before explained, "*And I will raise him up at the last day.*"

Now, if you would duly appreciate the weight of this argument, bring up all the OBJECTIONS you have ever heard, —"Perseverance is inconsistent with *free agency*—tends to *licentiousness*—inconsistent with *cautions, warnings,* falls of Christians, apostacies, &c.,"—bring them all to bear on this single text, and you will find them "like snow-balls pelting a wall of brass," or like noisy waves dashing and breaking on a rock!

This text, too, will confirm all that I have said about election, &c.

Obj. "*Coming* to Christ is a *condition* of their salvation." Ans. Call it "condition," or what you please, it is *sure to take place,* for Christ has promised "all that the Father giveth me *shall come to me.*" Their coming, therefore, and their salvation, are just as *certain* as though there were no such "condition" in the case.

V. Saints are Christ's SHEEP, and *shall never perish.* John x. 11–29: "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

NOTE 1. Christ knows his people *before* their conversion, and calls them his *sheep.* Speaking of the yet *unconverted* Gentiles, he says, (16,) "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must *bring.*" (They were, therefore, *not yet* brought.) Just so our Lord told Paul of the

unconverted Corinthians, "I have much *people* in this city." Acts xviii. 10. 2. The conversion of his people is *certain* and *infallible*. "Them also I *must* bring, and they *shall* hear my voice." Their calling, therefore, is absolutely fixed. Well, suppose they are called and have become Christians, will they *persevere*, or shall they be left to perish? Hearken—3. Christ *secures to them eternal life*. 28, 29: "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me, (he takes that for granted,) and I *give unto them eternal life*." Observe, he does not say "*will* give, if you persevere," &c.; but "I *give*" now, immediately. And what does he give? Mere *temporary* favour, so long as they are faithful? No, he gives unto them "*eternal life*." And, lest some one should say, though you now favour them, they will by and by perish, he adds, "and they shall NEVER perish;" and lest some one should say, Satan or wicked men will pluck some of them out of your hand, he adds, "neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;" and lest some caviller should still object, Thou art but a man, and cannot guard thy people in all quarters of the world, he rises still higher, "my Father which *gave* them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand!" and lest an obstinate believer in falling from grace should still object, "Your Father may be of a *different* mind," our Lord declares, "I and my Father are *one!*"

Thus, by *five* things as "immutable" as the word of Christ, those who have heard Christ and followed him may be perfectly sure of *perseverance* to the end, and of everlasting life, as the result.

Obj. "Hearing Christ and following him are *conditions* of becoming his sheep." Ans. No, for they were his *sheep before* they heard and followed him. (16.) And call them "conditions," or what you will, they do not make perseverance doubtful; because these will *certainly* take place, for Christ has promised they "*shall* hear" and *be brought*. Of course, they do not oppose the doctrine of the *certain* perseverance of every saint. Bring all the OBJECTIONS to bear against this also, and you will find the wall as solid here as before.

VI. THE PRAYER OF CHRIST for all saints secures their salvation. John xvii. 9, 20: "I pray for them: I pray

not for the world, but *for them which thou hast given me.* Neither pray I for these alone, but *for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*"

Obj. "Christ here alludes to his *apostles.*" Granted; he does allude to them *principally,* and some things in the chapter may allude to them only; but the burden of the chapter manifestly refers to *all his people* in every age.

1. Because he speaks of *power given him over all flesh,* that he should give eternal life to as many as his Father had given him, (verse 2.) It seems to be narrowing this text too much to suppose he alludes *only* to the twelve apostles. But supposing him to have had in his eye *all his future people,* the sentiment is sublime and grand. 2. But whether he *here* alluded to all his saints or not, it is evident, in the 20th verse, he had in view the *whole* of his future church. "Neither pray I for these (apostles) alone, but *for* ALL *them which shall believe on me through their word.*" Now, not only all the early converts believed on Christ *through the word* of the apostles, but all Christians since have believed through the same word *written;* and all future saints will be brought to Christ through the same word of these apostles. Hence it follows that, in this prayer, the Mediator actually interceded for *every individual believer.* The only question, therefore, is,—*Will his prayer be heard?* or will some one for whom he prayed be lost? He shall answer it himself, xi. 41: "Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me. *And I knew that* THOU HEAREST ME ALWAYS, but because of the people which stand by I said it," &c.

Before this argument can be destroyed, one of these two things must be proved—either that Christ *did not pray for all* his people, or that his prayer was *rejected* by the Father!

VII. The CHAIN OF SALVATION proves it. Rom. viii. 30: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here Predestination, Calling, Justification, and Glorification, are represented as so many links of an Almighty chain. If there be any meaning in the apostle's argument, the *predestination* of a person *insures* his *calling;* (i. e. his *effectual* calling, or *conversion;*) his calling insures his *justification;* and his justifi-

cation insures his *glorification*. Do you doubt? Suppose the contrary,—break the chain, and see what will be the consequence. God *predestinates* Peter and John; but, in the event, it appears Peter and John are *not called!* Does not this falsify the declaration of the text—"*whom* he did *predestinate*, *them* he also *called?*" Or suppose Peter and John are *called*, but God refuses or neglects to *justify* them,—would not this contradict the word of God, "whom he called, them he also *justified?*" Again, suppose Peter and John are predestinated, called, and justified, but after all they do not *persevere*, are never *glorified!* What a fall is here!—not of two immortal souls only, but of what is far greater, the TRUTH OF GOD! And yet we are told of Saul, Solomon, Judas, &c., that they were *called* and *justified*, and yet not *glorified!* Which will you believe, the apostle or them? We are told that the *cautions* and *warnings* of Scripture prove it *possible* to fall away; but here the Holy Spirit declares it *impossible*. Whose word shall stand, the Lord's or theirs?

Here, then, is a STRONG TOWER, into which the Calvinist runs and is safe. Men may *rail*, but no argument formed against it can prosper.

VIII. Because NOTHING SHALL SEPARATE CHRISTIANS FROM THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST. Rom. viii. 35–38: "*What* shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The apostle challenges to name *any thing* which shall prevent final salvation; and then adds, "For I am *persuaded* that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor *things present*, nor *things to come*, shall ever separate us from the love of God which is *in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

From which it is evident, 1. God loves his people with an *unchangeable love*. 2. One reason why Christians are never separated from his love, is that they are loved, and not for their own sakes, (not chosen for their merits, nor rejected for their sins,) but for the sake of *Christ Jesus their Lord*. 3. Therefore the apostle had a *full assurance* (for this is the meaning of the word *persuaded*) not only for himself, but for every saint, that no *temptations* of the world, the flesh or the devil, should ever prevent their eternal salvation.

Obj. "He does not mention *Sin.*"

Ans. 1. Neither does he *except* it, and those who say he does except it, should *prove* their assertion. 2. *Sin* was the *only thing* which he or his brethren were *afraid* of—the only reason for dreading persecution, famine, peril, death, devils, &c., was lest these should lead them into *sin*. This was *the only way* in which these things could possibly separate saints from the Saviour; and, therefore, when he expresses his firm persuasion that none of these things should separate them from the love of God, it is the same thing as saying, *these shall never influence us to sin.* God will give us grace equal to our day. Hence he says in another place, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. x. 13. 3. *Sin* is certainly included in the phrase "things present or things to come." And if neither things present nor things to come shall separate, it will be difficult for an objector, unless wiser than the inspired apostle, to name any thing that *shall* separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord!

IX. Because God hath made the decree of salvation IMMUTABLE for this *very purpose*, that his saints may have STRONG CONSOLATION and an ANCHOR to their souls. Heb. vi. 17, 18: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the *immutability* of his counsel, confirmed it by an *oath;* that by two immutable things, (his word and his oath,) in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we might have strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which hope we have as an *anchor of the soul*, both sure and steadfast," &c.

Now, 1. *Saints* are the persons who have "fled for refuge to the hope set before them." 2. To these God wishes to give *strong consolation*, an *anchor* to their souls, by which they may ride in safety, however boisterous the storm or terrible the temptation. 3. How does he accomplish this? By giving them an *immutable promise*, and confirming it by an *oath*, that nothing shall ever separate them from his love!

What could be stronger? It appears to me, that if a man be *conscious* of having fled to the hope set before him in the gospel—as many a Christian is, and *every* Christian

ought to be—for him, under such circumstances, to doubt his infallible salvation, is to suspect God capable of *falsehood* and *perjury!*

Obj. "He only promises to be faithful *in case we are faithful.*" Ans. Not to say that *Christ*, our surety, *secures our faithfulness*, so that we should be in no danger even on that supposition,—the Arminian idea that the faithfulness of God to us depends on our faithfulness to him, would completely overset this cup of *consolation*, and render our strong *anchor* of no use; for a sinner, even after his conversion, is as unable to stand or to persevere, in his own strength, as a stone unsupported to remain balanced in the air. And Christ might just as well take us up in the air and tell us, "If you remain here without falling, I give you my *word* and *oath* to save you," as to tell us "My faithfulness shall continue as long as yours!" What *strong* consolation could there be if salvation were promised upon *such* conditions? The cup of strong "consolation" would be emptied at once. We should carry the water of life in a sieve, or draw it from the well of truth in a bucket full of holes! The anchor might be strong as Omnipotence, and made fast as the everlasting hills, but we should hold it only by a *cobweb cable!*

X. Because saints are KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH UNTO SALVATION. 1 Pet. i. 5: "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

Note, 1. The saint's safety, "who are *kept.*" The original word signifies to *guard*, or to *keep with a garrison.* Thus 2 Cor. xi. 32: "In Damascus, the governor *kept* the city of the Damascenes *with a garrison*, to apprehend me, and through a window, in a basket, was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands." Christians, therefore, are represented as in a garrison or castle guarded on every side, lest the enemy should come in to destroy, or the soul should escape and be destroyed. God guards his people on every side, and there is not even a "window in the wall" through which he will let them escape. They are thus "*kept*" as in a garrison. 2. *Who* keeps the garrison? How strong is the *power* employed in keeping them? The text informs us, "who are kept by the POWER OF GOD." 3. *How long*

are they kept?—"*Unto salvation*, ready to be revealed in the last time;" and all this "*through faith*," or in a state of perseverance in grace.

Now, unless the garrison of the saints is too feeble to preserve them—unless the power of God is insufficient to keep them—and unless, after they have attained "salvation at the last time," they can fall from heaven, I do not see how it is possible for any of the saints to fail of everlasting life. Those who suppose the saints *keep themselves*, may well doubt their infallible perseverance; but those who believe that they are "kept by the power of God encamping round about them that fear Him," must be excused from any distrust.

XI. Because GRACE ABIDETH IN BELIEVERS and makes it impossible to sin fatally or unto death. 1 John iii. 9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed *remaineth* in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Observe, 1. This is a *universal* proposition, applying to all Christians. "*Whosoever* is born of God." What is said of one is said of *all*. 2. It is *impossible* for such to *commit sin*; "he *cannot* sin." Now, we must evidently except sins of *infirmity*, *deficiency*, and *partial* captivities to the law of sin, or we contradict the whole Bible, and make the apostle contradict what he said just before, "If any man say I *have no sin*, he deceiveth himself," &c. (i. 8.) The *sin*, therefore, of which the apostle here speaks, is of a different kind; either the *unpardonable sin*, (as some suppose,) or a *wilful, deliberate, habitual course of sin*, which appears to me to be the meaning of the Holy Spirit. "Committing" sin (ποιῶν αμαρτίαν) is here opposed to "doing righteousness," (ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην) and as "doing righteousness" is an habitual course of righteousness, so "doing sin" is an habitual course of sin. The argument will be the same whether the *sin* here referred to be the *unpardonable sin*, or such a *course of sin* as implies the person has no grace. To one of these the text *must* refer. And it is expressly said that this sin the real saint *cannot commit*—of course he *cannot fall from grace*. 3. We have the *reason* assigned *why* the Christian cannot fall: "for, or because *his seed remaineth in him*." So far from *sin driving*

grace from the heart, as our opponents so frequently assert, it appears from this that *grace* is the conqueror, and *drives sin* from the heart, and thus makes the believer's fall impossible. His seed REMAINETH in him.

Obj. "The argument proves too much, even that believers have *no sin of any kind.*" Ans. "No; it only proves that they do not live in a *course of sin*, that they do not *follow sin* as a trade, nor *work evil.*" 3 John 11.

Obj. "The text simply means we *should* not sin." Ans. Where then is the force of the *reason* assigned for not committing sin, "for his seed *remaineth* in him?" The apostle evidently meant to assert the *impossibility* of a saint ever falling from grace, so as to be *entirely devoted* to sin.

XII. Because saints are SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION. 2 Cor. i. 22, 23: "Now, he which *establisheth* us with you in Christ and hath *anointed* us, is God: who hath also *sealed* us and given us the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts." An "earnest" is a part given as a *pledge* of hereafter bestowing the remainder. Eph. i. 13, 14: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were SEALED with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our *inheritance*," &c. Eph. iv. 30: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are SEALED unto the day of redemption."

2 Tim. ii. 19: "The foundation of God standeth *sure*, having this *seal*, the Lord knoweth them that are his." The object of a *seal* is to *distinguish* property, and thus the Lord distinguisheth or marketh "them that are his;" it is also to *confirm* or *establish*. Thus we set our seal to a bond, and kings set their seal to decrees; and thus God makes his foundation *sure*. It is to preserve *inviolate*, thus we seal a letter, a cabinet; and, I may add, it denotes *secrecy* and *value*. In whatever sense you understand the word here, it denotes God's *special care* and *value* of his people. It is set on them to *save them from destruction*. It was said to the destroying angels—"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have *sealed* the servants of God in their foreheads." Rev. vii. 3.

Now, after the saints have been thus *sealed*, shall they *not* be *known* of God?—shall they *not* be *established?*—shall they *not stand sure* and be saved from *destruction?*

And, after they have received this seal as an *earnest* of heaven, shall they be disappointed of the *remainder?* This would be to make the seal of *God* less security than the *seal* of his creatures. We receive, therefore, the Spirit as the *seal* of salvation, and God's *earnest* of heaven. And this seal is to secure the saints "*unto the day of redemption,*" after which they will be in no danger.

XIII. Because *believing is a proof that the believer has been ordained to eternal life.* Acts xiii. 48: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." This teaches,

1. That *some are ordained to eternal life*—of course to *perseverance* unto the end. 2. That their ordination or election to eternal life *preceded* their faith in Christ; and that therefore they were not ordained to life *on account of their faith,* but for some other reason—even for the sake of Christ, in whom they were chosen. 3. That this *faith* was an *evidence* of their having been ordained to eternal life.

The argument needs no application. Show me one who has believed, and I will show you one who has been ordained to eternal life. Hence our Saviour's solemn declaration, John vi. 47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me HATH (not shall have) everlasting life." Also, John iii. 36.

XIV. Christians are safe because *their life is not in their own keeping, but is hid with Christ in God.* Col. iii. 3, 4: "Ye are dead, and *your life is hid with Christ in God.* When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Note, 1. Christians are *dead*—that is, to the world, the flesh, and the devil; and yet they have *life,* i. e. spiritual and eternal life. 2. This life is not left to themselves to keep, lest it be lost; but the support, continuance, and security of their life are in God. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." It is *hid,* kept as a *secret treasure*—hidden from Satan, from the world, and in some measure from the believer himself. 3. Christ is sure to keep it *unto the end.* "When Christ who is our life shall appear, *then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*" It is in view of salvation as a treasure kept by Christ we hear such expressions as these: "Unto him who is *able to keep you from falling,* and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory."

Jude 24: "I know whom I have believed, and that *he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him* until that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. On this account saints are said to be "*preserved in Jesus Christ.*" Jude 1. And it is this consideration which gives such force to that promise, "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*" John xiv. 19. Until the Lord of Life *dies again*, therefore, the life of his people is divinely secured.

XV. Because *though God may suffer his children to fall in part, he will not suffer them to perish utterly.* Ps. lxxxix. 30–34: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I *not utterly* take from Him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." These words, with the greater part of the psalm from which they are taken, though spoken originally of David himself and his natural seed, have also a manifest reference to *Messiah* (the true David) and *his seed.* They show,

1. That Christians sometimes wander and fall into sin—"they forsake his law and walk not in his judgments." 2. These sins bring *suffering.* "I will visit their transgression with the *rod*, and their iniquity with *stripes.*" 3. Yet he will *not utterly forsake.* "Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I *not utterly* take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." 4. It is intimated that to take away mercy from *his people* would be to take it from *Christ*, whose people they are; and that such conduct on the part of God the Father would be unfaithfulness to his Son, and a breach of their mutual *covenant.* "My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from *Him*, nor suffer my *faithfulness* to fail; my *covenant* will I not break; once have I sworn unto David, his seed shall endure for ever," &c.

For similar promises of *unchangeable* love, see Isa. xli., xliii., xlv., liv.; in short, the greater part of that prophecy, from the 40th chapter to the end.

These general promises we see fulfilled in *particular* instances; as in *David*, who fell, but soon rose again higher than ever; in *Solomon*, who, though he fell *far*, did not fall *utterly*; in *Peter*, who, though he was suffered to be

"sifted by Satan as wheat," was not left in the power of his enemy. Just so of *all his people*,—he may suffer them to be tempted, but "God is *faithful*, who will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able, and will, with the temptation, also provide a way of escape." 1 Cor. x. 13. If, then, GOD IS FAITHFUL, saints are safe.

XVI. Because the Bible *takes it for granted of all apostates that they never were Christians.* 1 John ii. 19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out from us that it might be made manifest they were not all of us."

Note, 1. Here were some apostates, or, as some would say, persons that "fell from grace." "They went out from us." But what does the apostle say of them? 2. That they *never were real Christians:* "they were not *of us*." He does not say "*are* not," but "*were* not of us." They never were genuine saints—never had real grace. 3. *He takes it for granted that, if they had been Christians, they would have remained so, and would have never fallen.* "For, *if* they had been of us, they would, *no doubt*, have continued with us." Observe how *positively* he denies of apostates that they ever were Christians; and with what confidence he asserts that, if they had been saints, they would never have fallen! He does not even *argue* on the subject; but, as if the matter would not admit of a *question*—as if there was no *possibility of its being otherwise*—he takes it for granted, "if they had been of us, they would, *no doubt*, have continued with us."

So we say of Judas, Saul, Hymeneus, and apostates now-a-days, "if they had been saints, they would have continued saints." If they had been "once in grace, they would have been always in grace." And we think it unnecessary to *doubt* upon a subject on which the inspired apostle speaks with so much *confidence*. If men will still assert that our doctrines were first preached by *Satan*, that they came from *hell*, and will stake their soul's salvation that men may fall from grace, we can only wonder at them, and weep over them! We will not render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. They may talk of their having been once Calvinists, and of their having tried our system and rejected

it. We say of these as the apostle said of errorists in his day, "They were not of us; for, *if* they had been of us, they would, *no doubt*, have continued with us." They undoubtedly held (or they would not assert it) *what they thought* Calvinism; just as the persons mentioned by John possessed *what they thought* Christianity; but the apostle decided that they were mistaken.

In all this I mean not to call in question the real piety of my brethren. Would I were half as holy as some who affirm that they "abhor Calvinism!" But this I say, when they speak against Calvinism, "they know not what they do;" and peradventure they "will be found fighting against God!"

Apostates are generally spoken of as those who *never had grace*. 1 John iii. 6: "Whosoever sinneth *hath not seen* Him, neither known Him." Observe, it is not said, "*does* not *now see* Him," but "*hath* not seen Him;" i. e. never saw Him. So 3 John 11, "He that doeth evil *hath not seen* God." Show me a man, then, who now lives in a course of habitual sin, who has no grace, and I will show you one that *never had grace*, whatever he might have professed. Thus our Lord says of certain self-deceivers, "I *never* knew you," Matt. vii. 23; that is, I not only do not know and own you *now*, but I never knew and owned you as my true disciples. Thus the *stony ground* hearers had "*no root* in themselves." Matt. xiii. 21. The foolish virgins had "*no oil* in their vessels." Matt. xv. 3. Thus the apostates in Peter (ii. 20–22) are compared to the *swine* whose nature was not changed. All these are intimations to us, I think sufficiently clear, that those who fall away from their profession are to be considered as *having never had grace*. Yet you will hear men appealing to *their own experience*, and ministers appealing to the *experience* of their hearers, that *they themselves* have fallen from grace, and even pointing to "*swine* now wallowing" in sin, as instances of those who were once of the number and *nature* of Christ's *sheep!*

That those who teach such doctrines sincerely believe them, I have no more question than that I sincerely believe my own; but I ask, how can such doctrines be reconciled with the general tenor of the word of God, which every-

where teaches that "*if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us?*"

XVII. Lastly, because the contrary opinion leads to many ABSURDITIES. It appears to me to follow from the doctrine of our opponents,

1. That, in respect of the *covenant* under which we are, *we are worse off than before the fall.* Our state was dangerous enough then, when we had a perfect man for our surety; but infinitely more so now, when we wretched sinners are our own sureties! And yet the apostle says of Christ that "he is the mediator of a *better covenant,* which was established upon *better promises.*" Heb. viii. 6. If better than the Sinai Covenant, (which contained some promises of grace,) infinitely better than the covenant of works. 2. A man may *fall from grace twenty times a day, and twenty times a day rise into grace again!* Thus that marvellous *change* which requires Almighty power to effect—that renovation of nature which is called a *new birth,* a *new creation,* a *resurrection* from the dead, becomes a mere trifle! . . . Thus the Holy Spirit, so far from *dwelling* in the believer's heart in peace, is liable to be dispossessed every day, hour, and moment; to have his temple turned into Satan's castle, according to the sinner's caprice! 3. Upon this principle, there is nothing in the word of God to authorize *an assurance of salvation for ourselves.* Nay, more: there can be no *certainty* of our continuance in grace for one hour or moment! For, if our perseverance depends upon ourselves, and there be no promise that a saint *shall* persevere, then there is no promise that *you* or *I* shall persevere; and, therefore, if on our dying bed, and within five minutes of our end, though we are now full of grace and love and joy, we cannot be *sure* but we shall *yet* sink to hell. For, if God has made no promise to keep us from falling, he may let us fall at one moment as well as at another, and even while the breath is leaving the body Satan may assault, our faithfulness may fail, and from the very verge of heaven, with GLORY full in view, and angels waiting to receive and bid us welcome, we may drop—for ever! 4. For the same reason there can be no such thing as *assurance for others,* and we can have little comfort in the death of our pious relatives and friends. Though they may have served God from child-

hood, and brought forth the fruits of holiness till they are threescore years and ten, and have been burning and shining lights in their day and generation, we cannot be sure but they will yet perish! And should they die far from home, on the ocean, in a strange land, in a delirium, or in any way in which we could not have evidence of their being in grace at their *last moment*, we can have no certain or comfortable hope. In fact, if I believed that the perseverance of a saint depended on his own faithfulness, with my present views of human nature, I do not know how I could even *hope* for a single friend on earth; and, as to *confidence* of their salvation, it would be impossible until I saw them pass the gate of heaven. If there be no *absolute* promise to the believer to *keep* him to salvation; then, though the apostle Paul were within five minutes of eternity, and entering the heavenly harbour under the full sail of a perfect assurance, we could not be SURE, but that in the very article of death, in the very entrance to the harbour, he might slip his cable, lose his anchor, or strike on some hidden rock and sink to perdition! Who could tell, in reference to our dying Christian friends, but that, in the last hour, when heart and flesh were failing them, Satan might take advantage of their feebleness, and, by a violent assault, make them *let go their hold*, and then drag them down to hell! This is *not* the consolation of the gospel. The infallible promise of God makes us confident that he who hath begun a good work in us will perform it (or carry it on) unto the day of Jesus Christ.

> "Grace will complete what grace begins,
> To save from sorrows and from sins;
> The work that wisdom undertakes,
> Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

5. It is absurd to *pray to God for perseverance*, or to *thank him* for the same. For, if God cannot cause us to persevere without destroying our free agency, and if our perseverance depends upon ourselves, I do not know why we should pray to God for influence which he cannot consistently grant, or ask assistance from anybody but *ourselves*.

The psalmist might say, (Ps. cxix. 117,) "*Hold thou me up*, and I shall be safe;" for *he* did not believe that "holding up" destroyed his free agency. But those who think they must *hold themselves up* or fall, cannot, according to

my views of propriety, offer this prayer. If we persevere, I cannot see the propriety of *thanking God* for that for which we are chiefly, if not wholly, indebted to ourselves. The *apostle* might say, (Acts xxvi. 22,) "Having obtained *help of God*, I continue until this time;" but *we* ought to say, "Having been *faithful* to *ourselves*, we have come thus far."

The above appear to me legitimate inferences from the doctrine of our opponents. I am aware, however, that these inferences are some of them in fact denied; and I do not think it fair to charge on any church inferences from their doctrine, which they themselves reject. I am persuaded that many who reject our doctrine, rely as entirely upon *grace* for perseverance, and give to God the glory of salvation as entirely as ourselves. There is sometimes "a happy inconsistency between men's heads and hearts," so that the absurdity of their *doctrines* is not always discoverable in their *lives*. But it is fair to draw what you think reasonable inferences from a scheme, provided you do not represent *your* inferences as *theirs* when they disown them, and to show what you think the natural tendency of a doctrine, although the advocates of that doctrine may deny that such are always its actual effects. This is a liberty which very few hesitate to take with *us*, making inferences which we deny, and attributing to our doctrines a tendency which we abhor. To this proceeding we have no objection, provided they will call their children by their own names.

Whether the inferences I have drawn are reasonable or not, and how far they are practically adopted by those who oppose the "perseverance of the saints," I shall not attempt to decide; but they appear to me to be the inevitable consequences of their scheme.

OBJECTIONS.

To the foregoing doctrine some of our Christian brethren object,

I. That "*it destroys free agency*. God cannot decree the infallible perseverance of a saint without infringing his liberty as a moral agent." And they say a great deal about *necessity* being inconsistent with *liberty*, &c.

To which we answer,

1. We grant that *physical* necessity or *force* is inconsistent with liberty; but *moral* necessity or *certainty*, which is all we plead for, does not interfere with liberty in the least. 2. We do not suppose any *other* or *greater* influence necessary to *keep* us in a state of grace than to *bring us into* that state at first. In a word, if *conversion* by divine power does not destroy free agency, *preservation* by the *same* power will not. Nothing but divine grace *upholds* a Christian for a moment; and, if this upholding for a *moment* does not destroy free agency, why should upholding for an *hour*, or a *day*, or a year, or a lifetime, destroy free agency? 3. If God cannot decree the infallible perseverance of a saint without destroying his free agency, then our Lord *Jesus Christ* was not a free agent, for his infallible perseverance was *certain* and fixed. Isa. xlii. 1–4. The same may be said of *angels*, whose perseverance depends entirely upon God, and yet they are free agents. And the same is true, also, of *glorified saints*, of whom Christ says, "because I live, ye *shall* live also." Their perseverance, therefore, throughout eternity, is as certain as the perseverance of Christ himself; and yet are they not free? WE wish no higher freedom. See Rom. xiv. 4: "Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."

OBJ. II. *"It tends to licentiousness."*

Ans. We cannot always judge accurately of the tendency of a doctrine, especially if it be one which we do not rightly *understand*, which is generally true of doctrines *we do not hold*. The safest rule is to judge of the tendency by the *actual effects*. *We* think the doctrines of our Methodist brethren, for instance, to be of dangerous tendency. They think otherwise; and the actual effects prove that we do not understand the true nature or tendency of their peculiar tenets. Let them make the same allowance for us. We are quite sure they do not understand the tendency of our faith; for we *know* it tends to purify our hearts. The *certainty* of their salvation did not tempt the primitive believers to licentiousness; why should it have a different effect on us? They could say, (1 John iii. 2, 3,) "WE *know* that when he shall appear we *shall* be like him, for we shall see him as he is. *And every man that hath this hope purifieth himself even as*

he is pure." Why should the certainty of *our* perseverance have a different effect? Especially as we can have no *hope*, much less *certainty* of salvation, unless conscious of *present* holiness. Besides, this objection has been brought in every age against the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and the whole system of Salvation by *Grace*. Rom. iii. 7 and 31; vi. 1; ix. 19, &c. The apostolic answer should suffice.

OBJ. III. "The certainty of their salvation is inconsistent with the *efforts* and *labours* of saints to save themselves."

The whole force of this objection lies here, that, unless there be some *uncertainty* of success, a person *will not labour* for success; and, if there was a *perfect certainty* of salvation, a Christian would not trouble himself to use the means.

Ans. 1. *Christ* had a *perfect certainty* of success and salvation, and yet he used the means, and laboured with "strong crying and tears." 2. *Paul* had a *perfect certainty* of escape from shipwreck, and yet he used the means. Acts xxvii. In a *desperate* case, like that of a condemned and helpless sinner, *uncertainty* of escape, so far from being a stimulus, deadens every effort! Let there be a glimmering *hope*, and he will do something; let there be a *certainty* of a blessing *on his efforts*, and he will strive with all his might. And Christians can have no certainty of salvation except *through their own efforts*. How can they expect to *run* the race *without running*, or *fight* the battle *without fighting?*

OBJ. IV. "The *exhortations*, *cautions*, and *warnings* of the New Testament prove the *possibility* and the *danger* of saints falling away."

Ans. 1. There *is* a possibility and a danger of saints "falling away;" i. e. to a *considerable extent*. They are in continual "danger" of complying with temptation, of conforming to the world, of sitting down in indolence, and of falling into sin. Hence the propriety of all these *moral stimulants* to activity and watchfulness. If a soldier, from the known character of his captain, were sure of winning the battle, and of the life of every soldier being preserved, he would, nevertheless, fight, knowing that he would otherwise be knocked down, trodden under foot, wounded, and disgraced, even though he escaped with life. Just so; though Christ has promised that every soldier shall escape

with life, he has not promised he shall escape with *honour* and receive the crown of victory, unless he fight valiantly. He may, and often does, leave the indolent and the cowardly to be wounded, disgraced, and maimed for life. As the *present comfort* of a Christian, therefore, depends on his activity and holiness, and as his *future reward* will be *measured* by his attainments here, there is the utmost propriety and kindness in administering these cautions and holding out these encouragements. 2. Viewed *in himself*, as I have hinted before, there is a possibility and danger, yea, a *certainty* of his falling *entirely away*, unless he strives and labours. But there is neither certainty, possibility, nor danger of God's breaking an *absolute promise* to save all who come to Christ.

OBJ. V. "Facts of acknowledged saints falling into sin—such as *David*, *Solomon*, and *Peter*." As great reliance is placed on this argument, I will notice it more particularly

DAVID. 1. That he *died* a saint, and is *now* in heaven, I believe nobody questions. 2 Sam. xxiii. Of course he did not *finally* fall from grace, and his example, therefore, is nothing to the point. They must bring an instance of a saint who *actually perished*. 2. That he fell into *sin*, and into a great and complicated sin, is lamentably true. That his conscience was stunned by his fall, and his spiritual comfort entirely destroyed, I have no question. But that he fell *entirely* from grace, when there are so many clear declarations of God to the contrary in regard to *every* saint, I will not admit, except on one condition—that those who assert it will produce some *express declaration* of God to that effect.

That the Lord was *displeased* with David, as he is with every Christian when he sins, is not denied; but that he *wholly cast him off* is nowhere said, and never can be proved. That the Holy Spirit took away the "joys of his salvation" is admitted, but that the Spirit *entirely* left him cannot be proved, and the contrary is implied in Ps. li. 11. A flame may be damped without being quenched; a seed may be buried deep without being killed; a man may be very sick and nigh unto death, and yet not dead; a saint may fall very far, and yet not be lost; God may *chastise*, but will "not utterly" destroy; may "*hide* his face for a mo

ment, but with *everlasting* kindness will he have mercy" on his people. Ps. lxxxix. 30–34; Isa. liv. 8. It remains, therefore, for them to prove that David became spiritually dead and was "born again" a second time.

SOLOMON is another instance of a saint supposed to have fallen from grace. My reasons for believing that Solomon neither totally nor finally fell from Divine favour are—

1. The *circumstances of his birth and infancy.* "Before he had done either good or evil," in his infancy, it is said "*the Lord loved him*," 2 Sam. xii. 24; the same expression which is used of Jacob, Rom. ix. 13, and denotes his choice to salvation. 2. The *name* which the Lord then gave him, "*Jedediah*," or beloved of the Lord. I do not think an instance can be brought of a person thus honoured with a divine name, who was afterward rejected. 2. The *Promise* concerning him. 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. Where the Lord promises to be a father to him, to *chasten* but not *disinherit* him; and expressly distinguishes the favour intended for *him* from the mere temporary favour granted to *Saul.* 4. The *reserve* expressed, 1 Kings xi. 4, 6: "And his heart was *not perfect* with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went NOT FULLY after the Lord, as did David his father." This is spoken of him at the time of his greatest wickedness, even "when his wives turned away his heart after other gods." (Verse 4.) 5. *Commendation* after his death. 2 Chron. xi. 17; Neh. xiii. 26. 6. He wrote the book of *Ecclesiastes* (i. 1) when he was an *old man*, and confesses the very sins of which the objectors suppose he did not repent. And the apostle says of the Scripture writers generally, "*Holy men* of God, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i. 21. Thus it appears from the *history* itself, as I think, that Solomon did not perish. But, if all this were blotted out, I would not believe he was lost, until—7. The ABSOLUTE PROMISES of God in regard to *every* saint are blotted out also.*

PETER did not *finally* fall, as all admit. That he did not

* Were there good reason to doubt of Solomon's salvation, we might put upon our opponents the burden of proof that he ever was a *real saint*, in the sense before defined. But we prefer to give our real sentiments and interpretation of the Bible.

totally fall, is evident to my mind from Luke xxii. 32, where our Lord says, "Simon, Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that *thy faith may not fail;*" from which it is evident that his faith did not *entirely fail.*

OBJ. VI. "Some acknowledged apostates were once saints, as *Saul, Judas, Hymeneus,* and *Philetus.*"

As to *Saul,* it is said the Lord "turned him into *another man* and gave him *another heart,*" 1 Sam. x. 6, 9; (i. e. made him a *wiser* and *greater* man, to qualify him for the kingdom;) but it is nowhere said God gave him a *new* heart and made him a *holy* man, and there is no evidence that he ever had grace. "But he had the Spirit of the Lord and prophesied." True, and so had some in the New Testament, Matt. vii. 23, who "*prophesied* and cast out *devils* and did many *wonderful* works," and yet Christ says, "I *never* knew you." That is, they *never were* saints.

Of *Judas,* it is said that he was once a good man, because the Lord says, "Have not I *chosen* you twelve?" John vi. 70. We grant he was *chosen* to the *apostleship,* but not to *salvation!* Thus the Lord says, "I speak not of you all, I know whom I have *chosen.* Ye are clean, but not all." John xiii. 10, 18.

Obj. "But would Christ call 'a devil' to the apostleship, and send him forth to preach the gospel? What should we think of a church now that would send forth a wicked man to preach the gospel?" Ans. Which is the worse, to *call* a devil unto the apostleship, or to *continue* him in the apostleship *after* his character is discovered? And did not our Lord do this? David foretold, many centuries before, that one of the disciples would be a wicked man, and Christ knew this well and who it was that should betray him when he called him to the apostleship.

Obj. "But he cast out devils, and if he were a devil at this time, then did Satan cast out Satan, which our Lord says is absurd." Ans. This is a mere *quibble.* Suppose Judas did cast out devils, it was not *Satan,* but *our Lord* who gave him the power and the disposition to cast them out.

Obj. But it is said, "Judas, by transgression, *fell.*" True, and the same passage states what he fell from, to wit, "the *ministry* and *apostleship.*" Acts i. 25.

Obj Jesus says, "Them which thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost, *but* the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." John xvii. 12. The objection turns on the word "*but*," as if it implied that the "son of perdition" was one of those "given to Christ." And in our English idiom, the inference would be natural. "But," in the Hebrew idiom, implies no such thing. The expression no more proves that Judas was one of those given to Christ, than the expressions (Luke iv. 24, 25) prove that the widow of *Sarepta* was one of the widows of *Israel;* or that Naaman, the *Syrian*, was one of the lepers of *Israel;* or that those whose "names are written in the Book of Life" were of the class that "maketh a lie." Rev. xxi. 27. See, also, Acts xxviii. 22, and 1 Cor. ii. 11. "There shall be no loss of any man's life; *but* of the ship." Quere: Was the *ship* a man's life? "Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, *but* the Spirit of God." Is the Spirit, therefore, a man?

Hymeneus and *Alexander* are also said to have fallen from grace, because they "put away a good conscience and made shipwreck of faith." 1 Tim. i. 19.

Ans. 1. A man may have a "*good conscience*" and not be a Christian, for Paul "lived in all good conscience" before his conversion. Acts xxiii. 1. And the "faith" of which shipwreck was made is the *doctrine* of the gospel. As it is said in 2 Tim. ii. 18, "Hymeneus and Philetus concerning the *truth* have erred, saying that the *resurrection* is past already, and thus overthrow the *faith* of some." 2. These apostates are expressly *distinguished from true saints* in the next verse. After mentioning their fall, the apostle says, "*nevertheless* the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, *the Lord knoweth them that are his*,"—plainly implying that Hymeneus and Philetus never were really "his."

Obj. VII. "The warning given concerning the righteous in Ezek. xviii. and xxxiii. proves that the righteous may fall away," &c.

Ans. 1. Look at the *object* of the sacred writer, which is to teach that *God will "deal with men according to their ways."* In the 18th chapter the object is to do away the parable of the "sour grapes," or the punishment of children

for the sins of their parents. The Lord declares that the *righteousness* of a *parent* shall not save a *wicked son;* neither shall the wickedness of a *parent* prevent the salvation of a *righteous* son. And, in the 33d chapter, the object is to show that no *past* righteousness shall save a man *if* he falls away; and no *past* sins shall ruin a man *if* he repents. There is nothing in this contrary to our doctrine. 2. The "*righteousness*" here spoken of *may* be a mere *external*, ceremonial righteousness, such as Paul had before his conversion. Phil. iii. 6. And I do verily believe that *apparent* righteousness, rather than *real* sanctity, is here spoken of; and also that the *rewards* and *punishments* here more immediately alluded to, are of a *temporal* kind. The contrary, at any rate, never can be *proved*. We admit that from *such* a righteousness a man *may* fall away. 3. If we grant that the *righteousness* here mentioned be *real sanctification*, it does not follow that a righteous man ever *did* or ever *will actually* fall from grace. The text only makes a *supposition*. "*When* a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness—*If* he trust to his own righteousness," &c. Now, we grant *if* he does this, and *when* he does this, he will be lost.

But it is an old maxim in logic, "*suppositio non ponit in esse;*" i. e. supposition of a case does not prove its actual existence. *Suppose* "an angel from heaven should preach another gospel, he would be accursed." Gal. i. 8. Our Lord says, "*If* I should say I know him not, I should be a liar." John viii. 55. But these suppositions do not prove that an angel *ever will* preach another gospel; nor that our Lord ever *will* declare a falsehood.

OBJ. VIII. "*The breaking off the Jewish branches proves falling from grace.*" Rom. xi. 17.

Ans. 1. The *olive-tree* from which these branches were broken off and others grafted in is the *visible church*. From this the Jews were cast out, and the Gentiles introduced. If this is "falling from grace," we do not deny it. 2. That there was not a single *saint* lost by the rejection of the Jews, is evident from the first part of the chapter, "Hath God cast away *his people?* God forbid. *God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew. The election hath obtained it*, and the rest were blinded." (Verses 1, 3, 7.) Hence

it appears that every elect person or every Christian was saved. 3. At the conclusion of the account, the apostle makes this remark: "The gifts and calling of God are *without repentance;*" i. e. without any change of mind on his part—without any recalling of his saving grace.

OBJ. IX. "*Paul laboured lest he should be a castaway.*" 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Ans. So did *our Lord;* he was "straitened until his work was accomplished," but he had no *fear* of being finally cast away. The apostle, in all his epistles, as shown already, expresses his *full confidence* of the final salvation of every saint; and, if he ever *doubted* of his own *salvation*, it was because he doubted his *conversion*. But I do not believe that, after his being caught up to the third heaven, and the clear testimonials of a Saviour's love, he ever doubted either. In this text he simply intends to show *how he lived and laboured*, as an example for them to imitate. He exhorts them to run *as if* for a prize, as a racer would, who knew that *if* he did not run well he would be disgraced. Our Saviour compares himself to a *thief*, to express the *unexpectedness* of his coming, though he resembled him in nothing else. So the apostle compares himself to a *racer*, to show the intensity of his labours, though, unlike a racer, he was *perfectly sure of* victory. Hence he says, (26,) "So run I, *not as uncertainly;* so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." See, also, Gal. ii. 2, and 2 Tim. iv. 6–8, 18: "And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."

After all, it is not said he *was* cast away, or that any saint *will* be cast away. So that all such texts prove nothing against perseverance. That we *should all run and strive* in the same manner, every Calvinist grants.

OBJ. X. It is said of the Galatians, "*Ye are fallen from grace.*" Gal. v. 4. This is an objection drawn from the mere *words* of Scripture, without noticing the scope and *intention*. By the same rule I could prove "there is no God." Ps. xiv. Or that the apostle was a "robber of churches." 2 Cor. xi. 8. The *doctrine* of Scripture, and not the mere *words*, is the truth of God. Now, let any one glance at the preceding part of the epistle, and he will readily perceive what "*fall*" was referred to—even a fall

from the *doctrines* of grace. They had "turned away to another gospel," and, forsaking the doctrine of salvation by *faith*, they sought justification by the works of the *law*. Therefore, he says, "Christ has become of no effect unto you, *whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace;*" i. e. from the *doctrines* of grace. The text is hypothetical, and no more proves "falling from grace" than it does "justification by law." And, as none are *really* justified by law, how does it follow that any *really* fall from grace! Barnes's Notes, *in loco*.

Observe again, that, if it could be proved that the Galatians fell *totally* for a time, there is no proof they fell *finally*, and therefore here is no proof that any real saint will be *finally* lost. Of course, understand it as you will, it argues nothing against our doctrine.

OBJ. XI. "Salvation is everywhere offered on *condition* of perseverance, which shows that the *condition may fail to be complied with.*" Ans. It shows no such thing; but only that, *unless* the condition be complied with, the blessing will be lost. This we freely grant. But we contend that the *conditions* (if they must be so called) are *sure* to be complied with by every one of Christ's people. Thus when it is said, "*If* ye abide in me, ye shall ask what ye will." "*If* ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." "We shall reap, *if* we faint not," &c. &c. It is all certainly true. But, unless our opponents prove that some real Christian *actually fails* to "*abide*," "*continue*," &c., these texts will not prove the loss of a single believer.

And I have shown already that these "conditions" are *sure* to be performed by *all* of Christ's people.

OBJ. XII. "*It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, if they shall fall away,*" &c. Heb. vi. 4, 6.

The objectors must prove two things:—first, that these were *real Christians;* and secondly, that they *really fell away*. But, in my opinion, neither of these things can be proved. I see no reason to believe them real saints. 1. Because these expressions may apply to those who had only those *miraculous external gifts* so common in that day. There is nothing said of these persons more extraordinary than of the false professors mentioned, (Matt. vii. 22, 23,) of whom Christ says, "I *never* knew you." The *stony*

ground hearers "tasted of the good word of God,"—"they received the word with joy," and yet had "*no root* in themselves;" that is, were not truly converted. 2. They are manifestly compared to the *barren* ground in the 8th verse, which is a proof the soil of their hearts was never prepared by the Holy Spirit for a true reception of the seed. 3. The apostle had no idea real *Christians* would thus fall away. "But, beloved, we are *persuaded* better things of *you*, though we thus speak." (Verse 9.)

In fact, the whole is a *solemn warning* to persons who have been *enlightened* and *convicted*, not to stifle their convictions, lest they commit the unpardonable sin.

But, could it be proved these were *real Christians*, it is not said they *will certainly fall;* but "*if* they shall fall away," &c. And this I have before shown proves nothing as to the *actual event.* Besides, if it proves an actual "falling away," it proves the "impossibility" of recovery! Do our brethren believe this?

OBJ. XIII. "A sinner may tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant *wherewith he was sanctified* an unholy thing," &c. Heb. x. 29. From which it is argued that a man may fall from *sanctification* and from saving grace. It is taken for granted in the objection that "he who was *sanctified*" is the *apostate.* Whereas,

1. It is generally supposed by commentators that the "*Son of God*" is here referred to; and, according to the grammatical construction of the sentence, the "Son of God" is certainly the last antecedent. And it is equally true of Christ that he was *sanctified* and *fitted* to be the Mediator "by the blood of the covenant." John xvii. 19; Heb. xiii. 20. 2. But, admitting it to refer to the *apostate*, it remains to be proved that the *sanctification* was any thing more than *external* and *ceremonial* sanctification. That both persons and things are called *holy*, and said to be *sanctified*, which are only externally *dedicated* to God, we have abundant evidence in this same epistle. In the preceding chapter, 13th, 22d and 23d verses, we read of a *sanctification* which had nothing to do with the *heart.* "*The blood of bulls and of goats*, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, SANCTIFIETH to the *purifying* of the *flesh*," &c. What sanctification of *heart* could ever be accomplished by the

"blood of bulls and goats?" And yet if a person upon whom this blood had been *sprinkled* should despise the ordinance, he would be guilty of "trampling on the blood of the covenant," for this typified the blood of Christ. In like manner, if, after having been *baptized*, and making profession of religion, we break our covenant vows and apostatize, we "despise the blood of the covenant wherewith we were sanctified," or *separated* and *dedicated* to the service of God.

The whole, however, is merely a *caution* against apostasy from our profession, and does not teach that any *will* thus despise the blood of the covenant—much less that any will fall from real sanctification of heart. "*If* we sin wilfully after having received a knowledge of the truth, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.*" (26.) If this proves "falling from grace," it proves also that after such fall *there is no recovery!* for such persons "there remaineth *no more sacrifice for sin*, but a fearful looking for of judgment," &c. But these texts prove nothing as to the *actual event*, which is the thing to be proved.

OBJ. XIV. "*If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*" Heb. x. 38.

Ans. 1. This is perfectly true in its *literal* sense, and not at all opposed to our doctrine. An opposite doctrine would be horrible. 2. There may be a difference between "drawing back" and "drawing back to *perdition.*" A saint may draw back *in part;* and, if he draws back at all, God will be *displeased* with him. 3. Here is the "*if*" again, by way of *caution.* 4. It is expressly said *immediately after*, that real Christians *do not* draw back to perdition. "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

OBJ. XV. "A man may escape the pollutions of the present world, and afterward fall away," &c. 2 Pet. ii. 20.

Now, 1. All this may be said of those who are only *externally reformed* from the infidelity, vice, and immorality of the world, and have a *speculative head knowledge* of the ways of righteousness. That such persons may and do fall away, we do not doubt. 2. That these persons were not changed in *heart*,—that their *nature* never was renewed, is evident from the *comparison* used by the apostle on the

subject. He compares them to "a *sow* that was *washed* returning to her wallowing in the mire." The *nature* of the animal was not changed; though externally washed, her appetites remained the same; she was a *sow* still. Had her *nature* been changed to that of a *sheep*, she would *never have returned!*

Thus I have noticed some of the strongest arguments I have ever heard or read against the "perseverance of the saints." There are others adduced of the same general nature, but no more difficult to answer than those I have mentioned. Some of them are drawn from *metaphysics*—some from *supposed facts*—and the rest from what is thought to be *implied* in several passages of Scripture. If I understand the controversy, the only *express* declaration of the *fact* of falling from grace, which they adduce, is Gal. v. 4. And that text, as I have shown, evidently speaks of a falling, not from *sanctification*, but from *orthodoxy*. There is not in all the Bible, that I have ever seen, a solitary declaration *that any real saint ever actually perished.*

That there are *cautions* and *warnings* of the most solemn kind against drawing back at all, we cheerfully admit. But, as I have brought *express declarations* of Scripture, and *absolute promises* of God that *every saint shall persevere*, all the cautions and warnings and apparent apostasies before mentioned must be understood as *not inconsistent* with our doctrine.

Let me now state in a summary way the arguments which have been advanced.

RECAPITULATION.

It has been shown that the infallible perseverance of the saints is clearly implied and proved, in their conversion by efficacious grace—in their election to salvation—in the predestination of all the called to glory—in the nature of the covenant of grace, and the faithfulness of their surety—in the absolute promises made to those who come to Christ, that they shall never be cast out, and to his sheep that they shall never perish. And again, because predestination, calling, justification, and glorification are so many links of an

Almighty chain; because neither things present nor things to come shall ever separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord; because the promises were made immutable and absolute for the very purpose of affording STRONG CONSOLATION and an ANCHOR to their souls; because the saints are kept as in a garrison by the power of God, through faith unto salvation; because grace abides in believers as an incorruptible seed, so that they cannot live and die in sin; because all who are converted are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit is *God's earnest of heaven;* because the very fact of believing is a proof of a foreordination to eternal life; because the life of Christians is hid with Christ, and is kept by him and not by themselves, and while he lives they shall live also; because, though God may chastise, he will "not utterly forsake" his children; because all apostates are spoken of as proving by their apostasy that they never had grace; and, finally, because many dangerous absurdities follow from the opposite doctrine—while it spreads darkness over the dying hours of God's best people, by resting their hopes of perseverance to the end on their own uncertain steadfastness, rather than on the UNCHANGING FAITHFULNESS AND GRACE OF GOD.

CONCLUSION.

Thus I have endeavoured to give my views of the "Perseverance of the Saints." I have sought to do it in perfect charity toward those who differ. Should similar charity be granted toward us, for *their* sakes I shall rejoice. For myself, no conduct of others, by the grace of God, shall ever alter mine. The law of God, the law of *love*, and not the conduct of others, is our rule.

The sum of what has been said is this:—There are *express declarations* and *unconditional promises* in Scripture that *every saint*, without exception, shall be saved. There is no express declaration that any saint ever *has been* or ever *will be* lost. There are many instances of saints *falling into sin*, but no proof that such persons *never rose again*. There are instances of *apostates* who fell from their profession and died in sin; but there is no proof they were ever real saints;

and many intimations to the contrary. There are many *cautions* and *warnings* against falling away; but these are stimulants to watchfulness, and means of grace as necessary on our plan as any other. And, finally, salvation is offered on certain *terms;* but these *terms* are *sure* to be complied with by all Christ's people.

And now, unto Him who hath loved us with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness hath drawn us to himself; unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy; unto the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

HYMN.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

In every condition, in sickness, in health,
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
"As thy days may demand shall thy strength ever be.

"Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismay'd!
I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

"E'en down to old age all my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.

"The soul that on Jesus hath lean'd for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll *never*—no, NEVER—no, NEVER forsake."

THE

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

THE covenant of God with Abraham under the old dispensation, and his covenant with men in these days of the Gospel, compose his great church arrangement for the salvation of the world.

In confirmation of this statement, let it be observed, that the Church of God, as to its *origin*, was intimated to man at the moment of his fall, but found its first development in the Abrahamic covenant; as to its *essence*, the unity of the Church in earlier and in later times is established by identity of parties, relations, agencies, and objects; as to its *form*, it was encumbered by a multitude of observances, ceremonial and political, in ancient times, while its modern administration is marked by simplicity and spirituality; and as to its *force*, while the Abrahamic covenant worked as a temporal arrangement to the close of the first dispensation, it clearly carried at the same time a spiritual bearing, coextensive with the general features of the Christian Church in the gospel dispensation.

We affirm, therefore,

THAT THE CHURCH UNDER THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT DISPENSATION ARE SUBSTANTIALLY ONE AND THE SAME INSTITUTION.

We have two legitimate sources of evidence: Old Testament language of the covenant, and New Testament interpretation of it.

The Church of God in our day is based upon that permanent spiritual covenant between God and man, signed

and sealed by a significant rite, whereby, through the atonement of his Son, and the agency of his Spirit, God offers and secures salvation to all that believe.

The New Testament Church embraces six particulars, and only six that are material: 1. Its dignity; a permanent covenant. 2. Its parties; God and man. 3. Its provisions; the Son and the Spirit. 4. Its great requirement of man; faith. 5. Its great promise by God; salvation. 6. Its appointed seal; a significant rite. If each of these particulars is fully embraced in God's covenant with the patriarch, then that covenant is the great gospel covenant; the constitution of the Church.

I. The Abrahamic covenant is a *permanent arrangement.*

It is universally conceded that the Church is a standing institution for all ages. If, therefore, the Abrahamic covenant is a temporary arrangement, it is not the gospel covenant. God's stipulation with the patriarch will be seen, however, to be an everlasting covenant, if we examine:

1. The language of the covenant itself; "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant." Gen. xvii. 7. This covenant is not confined to Abraham, for it extends to his seed; nor to the patriarch's children, for it extends to his seed in their generations; nor to any limited number of generations, for it is established with Abraham and his seed, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant.

2. The multiplied and most solemn rehearsals of the covenant through all periods of the Old Testament dispensation, as an everlasting covenant.

In Abraham's day the Almighty said to the patriarch, "Sarah, thy wife, shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." True to his word, God did renew this covenant with Isaac

and with Jacob in their day. Nine hundred years after its formation, in the reign of David, this covenant was called up and confirmed in a most impressive manner. David said to Israel, "Be ye always mindful of his covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and unto Israel for an everlasting covenant." Here is a covenant of eternal remembrance; a command to a thousand generations; to Abraham a covenant; to Isaac an oath; to Jacob a law; to Israel an everlasting covenant. In like manner, the Scriptures present frequent notices of this transaction as an everlasting covenant through all the days of the prophets, especially by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and even by Malachi. Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4, 6; Is. xxiv. 5; lv. 3; lxi. 8; Jer. xxxii. 40; xxxvii. 26; Ezek. xvi. 60; Mal. ii. 10.

3. This institution survives the Old Testament dispensation, and acts in full force under the reign of the Gospel, as an everlasting covenant.

We shall be compelled to present a multitude of testimonies to this point under every successive head of investigation, and shall therefore mention very few in this connection.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is spoken of expressly as everlasting: "Through the blood of the everlasting covenant." We know that this passage refers to the Abrahamic covenant, because it includes Christ, and Christ a curse for us, as we shall abundantly show. Indeed the writer himself gives us satisfactory evidence of this in a parallel passage in the same epistle. The Abrahamic covenant is well known through all parts of the Old Testament by three marks: It is styled "an everlasting covenant;" carries the general promise, "I will be your God and ye shall be my people;" and usually annexes some special promise of spiritual regeneration.

In Jer. xxxii. 40, God holds out the everlasting covenant with the patriarchal promise, "I will be their God and they shall be my people," and then he adds, "And I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." Now, in the eighth of Hebrews, Paul alludes to the Sinai covenant as an inferior abrogated one, and in contrast brings up that better, more enduring covenant which was established upon better promises. He gives us a sample of these better promises. One is, "I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people." Another is, "I will put my laws within their minds and write them in their hearts." Here are the three marks of the covenant of Abraham: it is an everlasting covenant, securing to Israel Jehovah as their God, and putting his fear in their hearts.

Whatever ambiguity may sometimes arise from the limited use of the term "everlasting" in the Scriptures, if the spiritual and permanent nature of the subject in hand its contrast with temporal covenants, its recognition in the gospel as a permanent institution, did not dissipate all doubt, surely the following testimony must settle the question forever. Under the New Testament dispensation, an inspired writer argues out the necessary perpetuity of the Abrahamic covenant, from its very nature as a solemnized compact. Such a transaction between men, says the apostle, is stable and binding; "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto." Gal. iii. 15. The Abrahamic covenant had been "ordered in all things and sure," and preceded the Sinai covenant more than four centuries, wherefore Paul continues, "Now this I say, brethren, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after could not disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." In substance this is Paul's reasoning: All the integrities of the Godhead had solemnly pledged certain blessings to Abraham

and his seed forever. This covenant is immutable in its nature. Therefore the introduction of a new economy five hundred years after, in the days of Moses, could not destroy the covenant. By parity of reasoning, the introduction of another, two thousand years after, in the days of Christ, could not make the promise of none effect. Thus, with the strongest assurance, the apostle speaks of the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham as actually descending upon Gentiles in these days of the Gospel.

The Abrahamic covenant is therefore clearly a permanent arrangement for all periods of this world's history: because it is God's covenant with Abraham and his seed in their generations for an everlasting covenant; was renewed in the persons of Isaac, Jacob, David, and all Israel as a covenant, an oath, a law, a word to a thousand generations, an everlasting covenant; was rehearsed as such by the prophets to the very close of the Old Testament dispensation; is still denominated in the New Testament an everlasting covenant, and marked by the well-known patriarchal promises; and is finally proved by the express argument of an inspired man to be essentially immutable.

So far as the first feature of the Church is concerned, permanency of obligation, is not the Abrahamic covenant identical with the Gospel? If the Gospel endures forever, the Abrahamic covenant also works through time and eternity.

II. Its *parties* are God and man.

All men know that the Church is not now confined to any one nation. Had the Abrahamic covenant, therefore, been limited to the Jews, this simple fact would have demonstrated its radical distinction from the Gospel. That the parties to the covenant with Abraham are the parties to the Church, not God and the Jews, but God and man, may be inferred:

1. From Abraham's titles.

The patriarch's first name, "Abram, high father," was changed to "Abraham, father of a multitude." The patriarch's descendants were numerous, and it might be objected that this appellation was ambiguous. He is styled again "father of many nations." It is difficult to confine this title to one nation. Again, "father of that which is of the law and that which is of faith." Should it still be said that there might be believers as well as legalists among the lineal descendants of Abraham, then let it be remembered, that Abraham is the "father of all them that believe," and "the father of the faithful." Surely these appellations transcend the boundaries of Judea to find the parties of the Abrahamic covenant. If there did exist one remaining doubt, it would be dissipated by his further designations, "heir of the world," "father of us all," Gentile as well as Jew.

2. From the descriptions of Abraham's seed.

Scripture furnishes two marks of the seed. Negatively: the promise of this covenant is not limited to the natural descendants of the patriarch; "neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children,"—all his descendants are not included. "They who are the children of the flesh are not the children of God,"—a part rejected. "For if they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of none effect,"—this establishes the spirituality and consequent universal bearing of the covenant. Thus, they who are of the flesh, of the law, the seed of Abraham, naturally, are not the seed of the covenant.

Positively: the Gentile as well as the Jew is covered by the Abrahamic covenant. The condition of the promise was formed with an express reference to the universal bearing of the covenant. The promise of Abraham and his seed was not made through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Had the promise been confined to the law, it would have been shut up to the Jews; but working

through faith, all that believe are embraced, without limitation to time or territory. Indeed we are expressly informed by the apostle, that in this covenant with Abraham, there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, "For you, Galatians, believing, are Abraham's seed. And of us Romans, believing, Abraham is the father." But this point is placed in the clearest possible light by one fact—Abraham believed before he was circumcised, expressly "that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles."

The parties to the Abrahamic covenant, therefore, are clearly God and man, because Abraham, the representative of man's interest in the covenant, is styled the "father of many nations," "of all that believe," "of us all," and "heir of the world;" because the condition of the covenant being spiritual, one man is as near to the covenant as another, and all have access to it; because Abraham believed before he was circumcised, that the covenant might not be confined to the Jews, but extend to all mankind.

So far as the *second* feature of the New Testament Church is concerned—the *parties*—is not the Abrahamic covenant identical with the Gospel? Does the New Testament Church extend farther than to all who believe? Does the Abrahamic covenant fall short of that extent?

III. Its *provisions* are the Son and the Spirit.

All men know that the Gospel presents the atonement of the Son of God for justification, and the agency of the Spirit for sanctification. If, therefore, the Abrahamic covenant had not included the same divine provision, it would thereby have proved itself a distinct covenant.

That the Abrahamic covenant embraces *Christ* we are fully assured:

1. By the most explicit apostolic interpretation of its language. In his Epistle to the Galatians, (iii. 16,) Paul

says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Christ was the natural descendant of Abraham, and was in that sense his seed. But we must not rest in that thought. The great idea is, that Christ is the only one of all Abraham's seed, the only being in the universe, with whom God could consistently covenant as a basis, a procuring cause, of blessings to men. Christ, therefore, on man's part is the capital, all-embracing, all-efficient party. How then do Abraham himself and all the rest of us become parties to this covenant? Here is the secret. The condition of the covenant complied with, identifies the party with the head of the covenant. Faith unites to Christ, so that all believers are in Christ. God therefore covenants with them, and promises to them, simply on account of their connection with him.

Who doubts that Christ is included in the Abrahamic covenant? In the seventeenth of Genesis, God covenants with Abraham and his seed. In the third of Galatians, Paul says explicitly that the seed of Abraham, in the eye of this covenant, is Christ. This fact places an irrefragable seal upon all that has been, and all that shall be advanced in this argument. For if Christ, in God's understanding, is indeed the seed of Abraham, then these six things clearly follow. The Abrahamic covenant is a standing covenant, not confined to the old economy, but extending to all generations; a universal covenant, not limited to the Jews, but opening itself to all the human family; a covenant, in its bounty providing the Son and the Spirit; in its authority, requiring faith on man's part; its reward, in promising salvation on the part of God; and in its designation, marked by a heaven-appointed seal.

2. This position is confirmed by other witnesses.

Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, testifies that the Abrahamic covenant includes the Saviour, and is at work in

the times of the Gospel: Luke i. 68–74: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham." God raised up this horn—Christ, in performance of his covenant with Abraham. Does not that covenant include Christ? Mary, too, contemplating the birth of the Saviour, ascribes his coming into the world to the Abrahamic covenant: "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever." Mary refers to the work of Christ, to God's fidelity to his covenant to Abraham and his seed forever. Does not that covenant include Christ?

3. This fact is still farther attested by the time and manner of the confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant.

Paul assures us, that long before the institution of the Mosaic economy the Abrahamic covenant was confirmed by God in Christ. Gal. iii. 17. If so, then, that covenant must have included the Saviour from its earliest inception.

4. This glorious truth is sealed by the declared end of Christ's sufferings and work on Calvary.

It is inspired language that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." But why? "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." If the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant looks to Christ crucified as a channel,—as means to an end,—does not that covenant include Christ?

If Christ is the seed of the covenant; if he is a horn of salvation in performance of the covenant; if he is a

helper of Israel in remembrance of the covenant, if he is God's confirmation of the covenant; if he is a curse for us to secure the blessings of the covenant; then, of a truth, the Abrahamic covenant embraces Christ, and was always a nullity without him.

The Abrahamic covenant provides *the Spirit* also.

It follows as a matter of course if the Son is embraced, that the Spirit is not excluded. It is the propitiation of the Son that opens the way for the dispensation of the Spirit. It is the Son who sends the Spirit. Nay, the Holy Spirit himself is the Spirit of the Son. If, therefore, the covenant of Abraham includes the one, it must include the other also.

But we have the express Scripture testimony on this head. We are told that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Gal. iii. 14. Here, in one inspired sentence, the blessing vouchsafed to Abraham and his seed in the covenant, includes in express terms both the Son and the Spirit. Christ works to secure the blessing of the covenant, and the Spirit is promised as a part of the blessing thus secured.

In this third feature—the provisions involved—is not the Abrahamic covenant identical with the Gospel? Does the Gospel provide more than the work of the Son and the Spirit? Does the Abrahamic covenant provide less?

IV. The great *requirement* of man is *faith.*

All men know that faith is the all-inclusive requirement of the Gospel. And if the Abrahamic covenant had satisfied itself with any thing less, it would thus have proved itself an entirely different institution. But the Abrahamic covenant, like the Gospel, works through the righteousness of faith, for—

1. The promise to Abraham was through faith.

We know that Abraham believed God before he was circumcised. We know, too, that Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness. We know by the Old Testament that the seal of the covenant was circumcision. And we know by the New Testament that the great import of circumcision was faith. For we have the testimony of an apostle, that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, "a seal of the righteousness of faith."

2. The promise of Abraham's seed required faith.

That the promise to the seed should be made on the same principle which carried it to the patriarch, needs no vindication. This the Scriptures assert: "For it was not written for his sake alone that his faith was imputed to him for righteousness, but for us also, to whom the same righteousness shall be imputed if we believe." Rom. iv. 23, 24. Therefore, as the apostle says, "the promise to Abraham and his seed was not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Rom. iv. 13. "Know ye, therefore, that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. So then they who are of faith, the same are blessed with faithful Abraham." Gal. iii. 7, 9.

Now if Abraham was justified by the righteousness of faith; if the promise to his seed is made only through the righteousness of faith; if it was recorded in the beginning that Abraham obtained his righteousness by faith, precisely that we might believe and obtain the same righteousness; if we who believe are the children of Abraham, and any other principle of acceptance, as the apostle says, would vitiate the promise; if the seal of the covenant is circumcision, and the scriptural meaning of circumcision is faith; and, finally, if the provisions of the covenant are, first, Christ a curse for us, the great object of faith, and, second, the Spirit of Christ, the great agent of faith,—what can be

clearer than that in the covenant of God with Abraham, the great requirement of man is faith?

In this *fourth* feature—the *requirement of man*—is not the Abrahamic covenant identical with the New Testament Church? The Gospel calls pre-eminently for man's faith. The covenant with Abraham demands emphatically the same compliance.

V. The great *promise* by God is *redemption*.

All men know that the grand promise of the Gospel is salvation. If the Abrahamic covenant had promised less, it had thrown a gulf between itself and the Gospel. But that the Abrahamic covenant offers redemption to those who comply with its terms is proved,

1. By the language of the covenant: "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession." The land of Canaan is a common type of heaven, and "given as an everlasting possession," would seem to enforce the propriety of this interpretation here. The accompanying promise, "And I will be their God," is frequently interpreted in Scripture, and always to imply salvation.

2. Spiritual and saving promises are perpetually and variously connected with the covenant as interpreted both by Old and New Testament writers. Among others the following may be found on record: "I will make an everlasting covenant with thee, even the sure mercies of David;" "My tabernacle shall be with thee;" "I will be with thee and will help thee;" "In thee and in thy seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed;" "Yea, I will be their God and they shall be my people;" "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear before me forever;" "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;" "He hath clothed me in the garments of salvation and covered me with robes of righteousness;" "This is all my salvation and all my desire."

All this language evidently imports the salvation of the Gospel.

3. New Testament statements settle this point.

The duty required by the covenant—faith a righteousness—clearly shows that salvation is the reward. The provisions secured—the Son and the Spirit—clearly show that nothing less than salvation can be the offer of the covenant. The price of the blessing—Christ a curse for us—settles the fact that God's promise in the Abrahamic covenant is Christian redemption.

If the language of the covenant promises Canaan for a possession, and Jehovah for a God; if the prophetic interpretation of the covenant includes God's presence with them, and abode in them, and blessing upon them, clothing them with robes of righteousness and the garments of salvation; and if the New Testament teaches that the Abrahamic covenant requires faith, promises the Son and the Spirit, and needs the atonement to secure the blessing,—then, of a truth, the great promise of God in the Abrahamic covenant is salvation.

In this *fifth* feature of the covenant—its *reward*—is not the Abrahamic institution identical with the Gospel? The Church gives no more than redemption—the Abrahamic covenant no less.

VI. Its *appointed seal* is an *emblematic rite.*

Literal consummation consists in affixing oneself to the covenant by the act of signature and of sealing; spiritual consummation, in affixing the covenant to oneself by the solemn ceremonial act of appropriating its emblem.

Where interests of great magnitude are involved, it is a custom, sanctioned by the wisdom of the world in all generations, that engagements between men should be literally signed and sealed. Man's awful religious responsibilities, his inborn liability to unfaithfulness, and the deadly consequences of sin, demand all the moral help which can

be secured. To meet the emergency, a spiritual covenant emblematically consummated is God's merciful contrivance. The moral bearing of a sacrament is invaluable. Sacraments address the senses, and summon them to give impressiveness to language. They address intellect, and emphasize upon it all the destroying and saving facts of man's case. They address conscience, and bring up distinctly before it the duty to be sworn. They address purpose and agency, and bring the soul to a deliberate and solemn self-commitment to God. When a man approaches a sacrament, all else is thrown off from the mind, and his very existence would seem to be shut up in the one deliberate act of forming and recording his vow to his Maker. Thus, in its first administration, the sacrament fixes on the mind a deep sense of final religious commitment, and through its every re-enactment or even remembrance, God looks in upon the soul and re-enforces obligation. It may be safely observed, therefore, of a sacrament, that by natural operation it combines strong moral influences to secure efficient moral action, and thus tends powerfully to sustain the fidelity of the subject.

Baptism, one of the two sacraments of our religion, is the sign and the seal of the great Church covenant in our day; and it is so in two senses. It operates an adoption of the covenant as by literal signature; and again, it solemnizes the act by an emblematic rehearsal of the covenant adopted. In baptism, God comes to man and covenants with his creature, and man comes to God and covenants with his Maker. By the authorized application of water and the pronunciation of the Triune name, Jehovah engages to be the God of the subject. By the voluntary reception of the sacramental water and name, the subject engages to be the servant of the Lord. Thus, baptism is both the signification and the signature, the expression and the execution of the great covenant of salvation, both on God's part and on man's.

The plan of salvation has always required on man's part repentance and faith, and pledged on the part of God, sanctification and forgiveness. All this baptism distinctly expresses. Baptism has a natural voice; it is purification from defilement. Man's voluntary application for God's holy water operates a confession of sin. God's application of it to sinful man expresses his promise of sanctification. Baptism speaks, too, by scriptural appointment, and expresses reliance upon Christ for remission of sins. The Master says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He, therefore, who comes to God's minister to be baptized, professes to believe. The apostles summon men to be baptized for the remission of sin. He, therefore, who seeks baptism, applies for justification by faith in Christ; while God, in administering baptism, signifies his acceptance of the subject upon the righteousness presented. Thus, by natural import and scriptural teaching, the ordinance of baptism clearly expresses the whole religious transaction between God and man: on the one hand, both the repentance and the faith required of man; on the other, both the sanctification and the forgiveness promised by God. But baptism is not language merely, but conduct also. It executes the covenant. He who enters God's house and receives baptism at the hand of God's minister, thereby speaks out before heaven and earth his repentance toward God and his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and this with a view to a present and an eternal covenant with God for salvation. So when God, through his appointed representative, solemnly administers the ordinance upon the person of the applicant, he too, thereby, speaks out on his part, and closes the covenant with the believer by pledging the symbolized purification and forgiveness. But baptism goes still one step farther. By baptism, as through a door, the subject verily enters into the household of God; while

through baptism, as by a personal embrace, God welcomes him to the adoption of a son.

What now is Christian baptism? It is neither more nor less than the great covenant of salvation between God and man expressed and executed, signed and sealed by both parties. Surely baptism is of God. The ordinance brings up every faculty of man's nature and every word of God's truth to impress upon man's soul the responsibility and the consolation of his covenant-stand at the moment when he first assumed it; and works to secure his final perseverance by solemnly renewing these impressions during every period of his subsequent life.

The final mark of the New Testament Church—what is it? It is this. The Church has its sign and seal in an emblematic ordinance appointed by God for this purpose. Now if the Abrahamic covenant had been established and administered without any such sign and seal, although scripturally identical with the New Testament Church, as all the world must see, in the five important preceding particulars, there would still have existed one important difference between them.

It is not enough to say that the Abrahamic covenant, like the New Testament Church, has its divinely-appointed sign and seal. More than this is true. Substantially the sign and the seal of the Abrahamic covenant is the sign and the seal of the Gospel covenant. This is true in a general sense. Each in its general nature is an outward sign of an inward grace. "Baptism is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." 1 Peter iii. 21. "Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." Rom. ii. 29. Each, too, in its general office, is the covenant of a purity required of man, (Gen. xvii. 11,) and promised by God Deut xxx. 6. But the similitude between baptism

and circumcision is not confined to their general features; it is exact in every important particular. Four things define Christian baptism: 1. By its nature, baptism expresses purification from defilement. So does circumcision. Jer. iv. 4. 2. By scriptural appointment, baptism stands for faith a righteousness. So does circumcision. Rom. iv. 11. 3. By baptism the subject speaks out his repentance and faith, covenanting with God, and God pledges purification and pardon, covenanting with the subject. Precisely this is the operation in circumcision. Gen. xvii. 11. 4. In the very use of baptism the subject literally enters into God's family, and is received by him. Exactly so was it with him who was circumcised of old. Phil. iii. 3.

Respecting this last feature of the New Testament Church —the appointed seal, an emblematic rite—is not the Abrahamic covenant identical with the New Testament Church? The covenant of the Church in our day carries a sign and a seal appointed of God, and embodying the substance of the covenant, both on God's part and on man's. The covenant of the Church in Abraham's day employed a sign and a seal equally appointed of God, and descriptive of the respective pledges of the parties.

It follows that the Abrahamic covenant and the Gospel economy, or New Testament Church, are one and the same institution.

It will be readily granted, if we separate from any given institution a permanent character; or from it its parties, God and man; or from its provisions, the Son and the Spirit; or from its requirements, faith a righteousness; or from its promise, eternal salvation; or from its consummation, a divine seal emblematic of the covenant; we thereby prove that it is not the New Testament Church. But if we show an institution of which these six things are true:—first, it is a divine arrangement as durable as the world; second, its parties are God and man; third, its pro-

visions are the Son and the Spirit; fourth, its requirement is faith a righteousness; fifth, its promise is final salvation; sixth, its consummation is a divine rite embodying the covenant,—is not that institution the Gospel economy? —the New Testament Church? If any man denies this proposition, what can he say? Certainly such an institution fills up the definition of the Church precisely. What is lacking? Here is the Founder of the Church! And the permanency of the Church! And the parties of the Church! And the provisions of the Church! And the requirement of the Church! And the reward of the Church! And the seal of the Church! And what of the Church is *not* here? If any man will do himself the justice to study out what he means by "The Church," we are persuaded he will find every constituent of it in the patriarchal economy.

We present two brief confirmations of this doctrine:

1st. The necessary identity of the Church in the two dispensations.

The Church must be the same in all ages, because the foundations are the same. What is the Church? The body through which is accomplished the plan of God for saving lost man by Jesus Christ. What are the foundations of the Church? The great governing foundations are twofold—God's nature and relations on the one part, and man's nature and relations on the other. These are always the same. On the one hand, God's perfect character, and his creating, preserving, blessing, and governing relations, are always one and the same to all men. Man's accountable nature, fallen state, and infinite dependence, are certainly one and the same in all ages of the world. Clearly, therefore, the plan of mercy growing up out of these elements can never essentially vary. Now if the nature of things, the history of the Church, and the word of God assure us that the two *dispensations* are not two

religions, then the unity of the Church in both makes it certain that our interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant is correct. For the Gospel properties ascribed to the Abrahamic covenant must be found somewhere in the Old Testament. Can we find them in the Decalogue? Can we find them in the covenant of Sinai? Where are they if not in God's gracious covenant with the patriarch?

2. Express Scripture declarations.

It is the word of Paul: "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. iii. 29. If you are Christ's, you are as closely identified with the Gospel, with our New Testament Church, as you can possibly be. But if you are Christ's, if you are in the Gospel, if you are of the Church, this very fact makes you the seed of Abraham, connects you this day with that covenant which God of old made with the patriarch. Settle this fact, that you are a Christian, and you have settled another fact, that you are under the Abrahamic covenant. You cannot be in Christ and out of Abraham. For an apostle says: "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." This is just saying, if you cannot tear away the Gospel from Christ, you cannot tear it away from the Abrahamic covenant.

Again, Paul opens his way to the previous text by this announcement: "The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Gal. iii. 8. This, in substance, is the summing up of the Abrahamic covenant. The first thought, justification by faith, and the second, the blessing of the nations in the seed of Abraham, make up its ordinary description. This passage identifies itself with the Gospel in two ways. The apostle's description of the Abrahamic covenant is an exact description of the Gospel. What is the Gospel? Christ for man; and justification by faith. The Abrahamic

covenant includes them both. First, "In thy seed—Christ—shall all the nations be blessed." Here in the Abrahamic covenant we have Christ for man. Again: "Foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith," as well as Abraham the chosen. Here in the Abrahamic covenant we have justification by faith. Thus the Abrahamic covenant is the Gospel,—that is, it is a system of salvation by Jesus Christ, which of old justified Abraham by faith, and is now justifying the heathen on the same principle. But this passage involves express as well as argumentative testimony to the identity of the New Testament and Abrahamic covenant. The New Testament name is given to the Old Testament covenant. The apostle expressly affirms this covenant with Abraham to be "*The Gospel.*" God of old made a covenant with Abraham. In so doing, the apostle says, "He preached the Gospel unto Abraham." If the Scripture, or the Scripture's God, knows what the Gospel is, the Abrahamic covenant is the Gospel: nor can mortal deny it, save at the expense of being wise above what is written.

INFERENCE.

If the doctrine advanced be true, then CHRISTIAN PARENTS ARE BOUND TO PRESENT THEIR CHILDREN FOR BAPTISM.

It is a remarkable fact, that there is one duty enjoined by the Abrahamic covenant which is not only styled the keeping of the covenant, but in one form or other is frequently repeated in the language of the covenant. This is the *application of the sign and the seal of the covenant to the person of the seed.* God says to the patriarch: "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." He whose alone right it was to limit or extend the covenant and its token, of his own good pleasure, has placed on record this

additional emphatic language: "*This is the covenant* which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee, *every male child among you shall be circumcised.*" The Abrahamic covenant is the New Testament Church. What right has any member of the Gospel Church to violate a principle so strongly taught in the covenant with Abraham?

I. Our brethren respond, *the Abrahamic covenant belonged to the old dispensation, and is not binding in the new.*

We now respectfully inquire, Where is there the shadow of an argument to establish this assumption?

1. Where in *reason?* Do not the nature and the relations of the parties, God and man, necessarily define true religion? This will not be disputed. Are not the nature and the relations of God and man at all times the same? This will not be denied. How, then, can we escape the inference that in all essential particulars God's religion in the day of Abraham must be God's religion in the day of Christ, and consequently binding upon this generation? Again: Can we form any idea of the New Testament Church apart from that permanency, those parties, those provisions, that requirement, that promise, and that seal, recorded above as constituting the Church of God in the Christian dispensation?

2. In the *Scriptures*, where do we find the slightest countenance of this opinion?

God's great church arrangement in the days of Abraham, as we have shown, stands and works in our day. The New Testament tells us that there were two covenants in the old dispensation. The one a covenant of law, the other a covenant of grace. The former was styled the "Sinai," the "Hagar," the "bond-woman" covenant. This law-covenant "gendered to bondage," and was cast out. In strongest antithesis the apostle brings up the covenant of the

"free-woman," the "Sarah," the Abrahamic covenant. Of this he makes a singular and decisive averment: this is "the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ," and therefore a covenant essentially immutable. For who can reason more clearly than this: If a man's covenant, being confirmed, must stand—God's covenant, confirmed, cannot fail?

But God has said, "This is my covenant," that ye apply the token thereof to your child. If the Abrahamic covenant works in our day, and if the Abrahamic covenant commands the parent to apply the sign and seal of the covenant to the person of his child, why is not every Christian bound to present his child for baptism?

We have been rejoiced, though not surprised, to hear that some of the most excellent and learned of our brethren who are not considered to hold our doctrine in the premises, do yet preach from the pulpit the present obligation of the Abrahamic covenant. Sooner or later, the whole Church of God, it would seem, must come to this faith. But why then do they not enjoin the baptism of children? Because they hold with their brethren,

II. *That the sign and the seal of the Abrahamic covenant is laid aside in the New Testament dispensation.*

Our brethren must bear with us while we respectfully renew the inquiry, where can evidence be found to sustain such a conviction?

1. What dictate of *reason* calls for the preservation of the covenant, but the abandonment of its sign and seal? During a long period of the world's existence, Jehovah subjected every male on earth who followed his counsels, to strong physical pangs, that through the bloody rite of circumcision, mankind might derive two important advantages: First, that they might impressively learn, on the one hand, their helpless depravity and condemnation; on the other, his gracious promise both of purification and of pardon.

And again, that through the same appointed sign and seal, mankind might be led to a solemn covenant-dedication of themselves and of their families to God's service, and be strengthened and comforted in the discharge of covenant obligations by God's emphatic assurance of seasonable co-operation. Now, if the generations of the old world in the service of God derived so much light and strength and comfort from the appointed sign and seal of the covenant, why do not we of this generation in the same service equally need its seasonable help? If a wise and merciful God did thus attribute so much importance to this sign and seal of old, as to style it "his covenant," and the neglect of it the rejection of his covenant, (Gen. xvii. 10, 14,) why should he order its abandonment in these days?

2. What *word of Holy Writ* suggests the thought that God is administering his covenant without a sign and seal in our day? Are we reminded that circumcision is abolished? Very true! But recall another fact; circumcision, in its outward nature, never was the sign and the seal of God's great Church covenant, but the sign and the seal of only one dispensation of it. A dispensation of a covenant has respect simply to the outward form of its administration, and may be changed a thousand times without touching the integrity of the covenant, even in its sign and seal. The setting aside of circumcision, therefore, may be nothing more than the exchange of one sensible form of representation for another more suitable to the genius of the new administration. The form of the sign and seal of God's great covenant with man is changed with the dispensation, but so also has the form of the passover been changed, and the form of public worship has been changed, and the form of the ministry, and the day of the Sabbath. And this is all that can be changed, the *forms* of things essential to the Church of God. For if religion is and must be the same in all generations, then the great leading principles of reli-

gion at one time must prevail at all times. Was it necessary to the cause of religion that there should be a Sabbath in ancient times? Then we must find a Sabbath in the present dispensation, and we do. Was it necessary that there should be public worship in ancient times? Then we must find public worship in the present dispensation, and we do. Was it necessary that there should be a ministry to represent God among men? Then we must find a ministry in our day, and we do. Now was it necessary that there should be an appointed *sign and seal* to impress man's mind through his senses; to rouse man's conscience by a sacramental commitment of himself and family to God; and to encourage man's heart by God's signed and sealed assurance of gracious co-operation? Then we must find such a sign and seal at work in our day, and we do. Baptism is the refreshing sign and seal of the gracious Christian dispensation of the great covenant, as circumcision was the painful token of the Old Testament dispensation of the same covenant.

It is said that baptism does not come in the place of circumcision. If it does not, we will show our brethren a marvel. Baptism utters every word and works every end of circumcision perfectly. Circumcision, as to its nature, is heavenly language of spiritual things through a sensible sign,—so is baptism, precisely. Circumcision in its natural import declares, "I am defiled and must be cleansed," on man's part; "you are defiled and I will cleanse you," on God's part. This is the natural language of baptism, precisely. Circumcision was set up to signify faith on man's part, and its imputation to him for righteousness upon God's part. So, too, baptism was instituted to express faith on man's part, and remission of sin on God's part, precisely. In circumcision man says, "I covenant with thee, O God, repenting of my sin, and looking through faith to offered righteousness;" and God responds, "I covenant with thee,

my believing child, and will wash your impurity and accept your righteousness" So does baptism speak out the very same voices of the parties, precisely. Finally: Circumcision carried the party into the visible family of God, and brought the arms of the father round his adopted child Here, too, baptism accomplishes the very work of circumcision, precisely.

Circumcision touched three things only: God, man, and the covenant between them. Baptism touches only three things: God, man, and the covenant between them. Every bearing of circumcision upon God, man, and the covenant, baptism carries out toward God, man, and the covenant, with precisely the same spirit, thought, and intent. In a word, by God's appointment, circumcision expresses and executes the great covenant of grace between God and man in ancient times. So, by God's appointment, baptism expresses and executes the great covenant of grace between God and man in modern times. What then can that man mean who says that baptism does not come in the place of circumcision? And what can Paul mean when he makes baptism follow circumcision in the same sentence, and pronounces baptism the circumcision of our dispensation? "In whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ—buried with him in baptism." Col. ii. 11, 12.

The argument may be summed up in a word. The Scriptures assure us that the Abrahamic covenant works in our day. The Scriptures assure us that one integral element of the covenant is this: its deliberate and solemn consummation by the parties respectively in and through their own personal act of signing and sealing the covenant. Now since no voice of reason or Scripture indicates its repeal in the Gospel dispensation, like every other part of this standing covenant, the sign and the seal of the covenant stands also, and is of obligation in our day.

But the covenant itself distinctly requires that its appointed sign and seal should be applied to the child of the believer. Why then does not every believer present his child for baptism?

The third and last objection of our brethren is this:—

III. *Baptism is indeed the sign and the seal of the Gospel Church, but it is to be applied to the believer only, and not to his children.*

Permit us once more respectfully to inquire, Where in all revelation to reason or to faith can man find authority for this limitation? A covenant of mercy with guilty man it belonged alone to God to make. A sign and a seal to this covenant it belonged alone to God to affix. The application of this sign and seal it belonged alone to God to determine. What has God done? By the very language of institution, as well as by the uniform administration of the covenant, God commands that the token of the covenant shall be extended to *two* parties—to the believer and to *his seed.* What right has man to restrain the application of this sign and seal to *one* party only?

1. What in *reason?*

What is the *foundation* of the covenant? The natures and the relations of God and man are alike unchanged in the old dispensation and in the new. If, therefore, the foundations of the covenant called for the application of the token to the child of the believer in the early periods of the Church, the same foundations call just as strongly for the application of the token to the child of the believer in the later periods of the Church. Does it not seem an outrage upon the basis of the covenant to hold that it suggests the limitation of the sign and the seal to the parent only?

What in the *spirit* of the covenant? Without the child's consent the parent brings him into the world, places him under law, imparts to him his own corruption, and opens upon his soul the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the

devil; and there the child is, largely by his parents' act, a helpless, hopeless immortality! Bear in mind, God made the heart of the parent to love the child almost as himself. When, therefore, the parent's mind has been enlightened, his heart circumcised, his sin forgiven, his soul adopted, and, in testimony of all this, when his very person has been solemnly signed and sealed by God's appointment,—what an agony must ever wring the heart of that considerate parent, as he looks out from the bosom of God's family upon his unsealed and excluded child, and feels that there is no hope of relief on earth! Here let us inquire, what is the spirit of the covenant on God's part? Surely it is the richest, strongest sympathy with the adopted soul! God feels for him in all the state of his nature, and gloriously relieves him there. God feels for him in all the state of his relations, and gloriously relieves him there. When our sympathizing God sees the parental feeling of this father, agonized deeply by the exclusion of his child from the family of heaven, intensely by the conviction that his own hand had largely wrought the mischief, and desperately by the assurance that creation can lend him no help, shall He feel for this father everywhere, save where his heart is swelled to bursting by the marked disinherison of his own child by his own father, and there shall God leave him unpitied, unrelieved? Rather is it not just like the spirit of our heavenly Father in all other parts of the covenant to cry out to the smitten, desperate parent, "Come! bring your child to me. Put him in my arms. If creation cannot help you, I will. I will place him in my family by your side. I will even fix the sign and the seal of my covenant upon his person; and he shall stand or fall largely according to your fidelity or unfaithfulness?" The spirit of the covenant on man's part, what is it? The Christian loves his child as he loves his own soul. He has been toiling, by God's help, to throw off his own corruption; why

should he not seek God's grace to wash the heart of his beloved child? He had been struggling, by God's help, to bring his own sins to the blood of Jesus; why should he not struggle, by God's help, to bring the blood of atonement to sprinkle the soul of his child? He had sought for his own soul the counsels, sympathies, and prayers of God's people; why should he not desire these same blessings for his child? He had accepted God's overtures, and through the appointed sign and seal dedicated himself to his Maker. In every other matter, without exception, he acts for his child; why should he not in this contingency also act for him who cannot act for himself, and in like manner dedicate his child to the God of his salvation? Surely it would seem in strong accord with man's spirit in all other parts of the covenant, nay, but a fair expression of his faith in God, that he should surrender to him his child also under a sealed covenant of religious education. Does it not seem, therefore, an outrage upon the spirit of the covenant, both on God's part and on man's, to affirm that it suggests the limitation of its sign and seal to the believer only?

What in the *object* of the covenant? The great object of the covenant is to glorify God in the salvation of men. In renewing and sanctifying the heart of man, the Spirit presents truth on the page of Holy Writ, by the voice of the preacher, and signally in the use of sacramental signs. These religious rites were appointed of God expressly to emphasize saving truth, enforce it upon the wayward mind, and thus bring the soul to swear to God under all the advantages of aroused thought, settled conviction, and fixed purpose. In the day of the revelation of all things it shall be seen, that the sacraments of the Church wrought powerfully, and especially in keeping man faithful to covenant. But where in all human society is the strong moral influence of a sacrament more needed than in this very relation of parent and child? Where would it accom-

plish more for human salvation? Only let any one generation of parents be faithful, and the world is converted. Fix your mind upon this capital fact in the ancient covenant. In the presence of God, to secure parental fidelity, circumcision imposed upon the parent a vow of faithful family education. This is indicated by the *act* of the parent. Circumcision was the seal of a vow. What was that vow? When Abraham circumcised himself, he cut off defilement from his body, and applied to it the symbol of purity. Thus he vowed that he would put away sin and live holy to the Lord. When Abraham's child was circumcised, a vow of holiness to the Lord was recorded upon his person, and Abraham's hand had placed it there. Surely by this act Abraham stipulates that he will do what he can to make the child holy. God's *command* teaches the same lesson. God said to Abraham: "Every male child among you shall be circumcised." By God's direction, Abraham took his children and circumcised them with his own hand. Thus God commanded Abraham to do that which vowed the holiness of the child. Of course, God bound the parent to educate the child to holiness. God's *interpretation* of his interview with the patriarch settles this point. The Abrahamic covenant is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. In the eighteenth chapter, God alludes to the covenant, and proceeds to say of Abraham: "I know him that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of justice and judgment, *that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*" The instruction is palpable. The promise of the Abrahamic covenant was in part conditioned upon the fidelity of the patriarch in the religious education of his children. Thus, by the act of the parent, the direction of God, and God's interpretation of both, we do assuredly know that the circumcision of a child under the ancient form of the great

Church covenant, imposed upon the parent a solemn vow to train him up for God.

Now, if the great object of the covenant is to bring the world to holiness, and if a religious sacrament is so well adapted to secure fidelity to the vow recorded, would it not greatly facilitate the design of the covenant if all the parents of the Church were summoned into the sanctuary there to record their sacramental vow, that they will faithfully co-operate with God to educate their children for the kingdom of heaven? Does it not seem, therefore, an outrage upon the object of the covenant to limit the application of its sign and seal to one party only, and thus absolve all the Christian parents of future generations from the solemn church-vow of religious education which was imposed upon all the parents of the church in generations past?

What in the *administration* of the covenant? In the world of nature God placed the child in the family with its parent. In like manner in the spiritual world, under the *old* economy, God placed the child in his own family with its parents. What imaginable change has passed upon the relation of parent and child in changing generations? If through all the ages of the Church's history anterior to the advent of Jesus, heaven and earth saw the children of the faithful abiding with their parents in the visible family of God, is it not an outrage upon the spirit and principle of the old dispensation to change the relation of parent and child so violently as to limit the ordinance to one party only?

The *spirit and bearing* of the *new dispensation* is still more unfriendly to the exclusion of the children of the Church from the seal of the covenant. Under the ancient administration gracious things were faintly shadowed through types and prophecies; under the new, the great Antitype himself is come, and a clear light shines forth on

every hand. Under the old, the laws, moral and ceremonial, sounded out their condemnations of sin, and the whole economy largely gendered to bondage; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and now promises and mercies everywhere abound. Under the old, worship was largely limited to one spot of the earth; the covenant was preached to one nation under heaven; the badge of salvation was affixed to one sex of the race. But under the liberalities of our most glorious day, every blessing is enlarged without limitation. All manner of worship is open to every foot of earth's soil where the spirit of man will come to God in spirit and in truth; the gospel is preached to every creature under heaven, Gentile as well as Jew; and the baptismal badge of salvation is extended to the whole race—to the female as well as to the male.

Now, when every other great and noble blessing, circumscribed and tied up under the first economy, breaks out into boundless development in our day, is it not an outrage upon the broad and liberal genius of the Gospel, to suppose that this very year of jubilee, which strikes to the earth all checks and hinderances to God's redeeming mercy, should strike from the persons of all the children of the Church that strengthening, comforting sign and seal of God's covenanted adoption which all the narrowness of the early dispensation could not deny them, and should cast our offspring out of God's family unsealed, to wander among the cursed heathen? The sign and seal of God's covenant, so comfortably pledging God's gracious and necessary help, —why should it be granted to the children of our fathers in the old dispensation, but denied to our children amid the abounding philanthropies of the Gospel? What shadow of a reason for this forbidding conclusion do we find either in the *foundations*, or in the *spirit*, or in the *object*, or in the *administration* of the covenant? What one thought can reason allege for this chilling limitation?

2. What in *Scripture* do we find to countenance this assumption? First, it is affirmed that *Christ the Master does not expressly teach the doctrine of infant baptism, and, therefore, refutes it.* We answer, first, that Christ, the Master, does not formally repeal the doctrine of the Church membership of infants, and, therefore, establishes it.

Christ, it is said, does not announce the doctrine. Why should he utter one word upon the subject? The Abrahamic covenant! Is it not the Christian Church? Is it not the primary law of the kingdom of Christ? *There* is the doctrine. There—in the very first record of the Christian Church. There—in the very constitution of the kingdom of Christ. There is the principle laid down with pre-eminent distinctness, that the token of the covenant shall be affixed to the children of the covenanting party. Why should he call up the doctrine in language? *There* it is, in the faith of every member of the Church of God,—every member without exception! There it is, within the knowledge of every man who is not a member! Where is the necessity of one word of further instruction? Who denies it? Who doubts it? Who is ignorant of it? Why should he open his lips upon the subject? *There* is the doctrine practically embodied before every man's eyes! There are all the children of the Church, round about in every direction, every one of them wearing the sign and the seal of the great Church covenant, and all the world consenting both to the authority and the benignity of the arrangement. This recorded command to apply the sign and the seal of God's saving covenant to the seed of the believer, if Jesus Christ did not purpose to repeal it, why should he waste one breath to teach it? Why, when the fundamental law of the Church clearly enjoins it? When the faith of every friend and foe of the Church strongly embraces it? When the practice of every member of the Church publicly expresses it? and when not a solitary tongue on earth is lifted

up against it? Who can fail to see the force of this appeal? Here, for example, is a Presbyterian pulpit which does not publicly disclaim the doctrine of infant baptism. Then its silence teaches the doctrine. For there is nothing now to gainsay the standards of the Church; nothing now to oppose the avowed faith of the Church; nothing now to set aside the uniform practice of the Church.

Brethren! Christ held your doctrine or ours,—that children should not, or should be baptized. If he held *your* doctrine, necessity is upon him, and he must speak out. For the standards of the Church, and the faith of the Church, and the practice of the Church, and universal public sentiment are all against him; and to put down this mighty testimony of God in the past, and set up an opposite sentiment and practice for the future—nothing can avail short of an express and authoritative *countermanding* of all prior teaching. But this Christ did not do, and you acknowledge it. Then he does *not* hold *your* doctrine. If he held OUR doctrine, there was no necessity for the utterance of a word. His silence leaves unsilenced and operative upon the world, all the fundamental, well-known, and well-received teachings of God in the prior dispensation.

Again: On various occasions the language and conduct of Jesus are such, that he will certainly be understood to teach the doctrine of infant baptism, if he does not expressly disclaim it.

When pious parents of old brought their infants to Jesus, however plausible the interpretation, that their little children were presented simply to be touched and to be prayed for, certain other things in the history were unquestionably true, and doubtless contributed to make up the mind which impelled them to visit the Saviour. 1. John and Jesus had solemnly testified to Judea, that the old dispensation was passing away, and that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. These parents believed the pro-

clamation, for, had they deemed Jesus an impostor, they never had sought his blessing upon their children. The changes! The changes that are to take place! What are these changes? How will God's people be affected by them? What disposition will they make of our children? These, these are the things which God has emphatically commanded the people to lay to heart and expect. Doubtless the serious and pious of the land did think and feel deeply concerning the great coming change. Nor is it possible to conceive, at such a time as this, that these parents should have been indifferent to the dispositions and purposes of the acknowledged Head and Founder of the new order of things respecting themselves and their children. Though the new forms were not yet introduced, still it was a perfectly natural effect of the preaching and miracles of the Saviour and his forerunner, that these individuals should bring their children to Jesus with a view, by some simple method, and if it was a custom, as some say, to bring children to eminently pious persons to be touched and prayed for, then by this step, to seek the Saviour's blessing upon their offspring, and learn the temper of the new economy toward them. 2. The religion of these parents, it must not be forgotten, had scarcely furnished them the very faintest conception of spiritual blessings unsealed. It is highly probable that they had never seen nor heard of any human beings whom they judged to possess one spiritual favour from heaven, who did not carry in their person, or in the person or persons of representatives, the mark, the appointed outward mark of God's adoption. The children in their arms bore the sign and seal of covenant mercy, and this, doubtless, encouraged them to anticipate his gracious consideration in their behalf. As they had no conception of holy blessings corporeally unsealed, of God's favours dispensed to those who did not carry the mark of God's adoption, they would naturally infer if their children

did receive spiritual favour at the hand of Jesus, in the proper time and way, they would also receive the appointed mark of connection with his people. Thus the whole drift of their sentiments and of their circumstances would powerfully expose these parents to misunderstand the teachings of Jesus, if he favoured their application, but did not distinctly apprize them, that their children, under his dispensation, would have no visible connection with God's kingdom. 3. Jesus knows all their mind. Now, if he knew that the kingdom of heaven would soon strike the seal of God's covenant from the persons of all the children of the Church, and to the dismay of every parent in Judea publicly amalgamate them with the children of the heathen, is it not highly probable that he will undeceive these applicants by direct explanation upon the subject? If he has such a message from God, is not this the very time and place to deliver it? Is it not certain that he will at least carefully avoid all such language and conduct as is calculated to awaken the very slightest expectation of any sensible connection between their children and the kingdom of heaven? What does he do? Does he utter one word designed to instruct these anxious parents, that, in the dispensation of his favours, they must not expect their children to receive any such mark of God's acceptance as shall visibly distinguish them from the children of the heathen? Not a word! On the contrary, all his conduct and language assure them that the same comfortable testimonies of heavenly favour which had always constituted so essential a part of their every idea of divine blessing they and their children should certainly receive. Mark the interview! Some would throw discouragement upon the hopes which were swelling in the breasts of these parents. The conduct of the disciples would fain indicate that there would exist no very strong sympathy, no very close connection between the Founder of the new economy and the children of

God's people. But how promptly did Jesus come to their relief! He substantially responded, "I am the Founder and Head of the kingdom of heaven. Little children are not to be separated from the kingdom hereafter, any more than they have been heretofore. Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xix. 14. It is scarcely plausible to say, that the last words of the Saviour teach that the kingdom of heaven consists of persons who possess child-like dispositions. What had this to do with the spirit and object of these parents? This construction violates two most important rules of interpretation. It forces the *language* of the speaker. The phrase, "child-like dispositions," is not found in the passage or the context. "Little children" is the clear antecedent of the term "such," "of such little children," is the language. The very first law of interpretation requires that words be understood in their most known and usual signification. The Greek term τοιούτων signifies, "these and the like." What Jesus said, therefore, is clearly this: "Of these little children, and their like, is the kingdom of heaven composed." Again: This construction forces the *sense* of the speaker. Only give the words of the Saviour their plain, simple meaning, and they express a clear thought. Little children are component parts of the kingdom of heaven, and should be brought to Christ, because the members should be connected with their head. Nor need it be denied that it might also have been in his mind, that there was a peculiar impropriety in excluding little children, because they, and those like them, are especially in character near to the kingdom of heaven. As thus: These are members of the kingdom; of all persons, do not exclude these little ones, and those like them. But concede that the language of Jesus does not, of itself, teach the doctrine of infant baptism with abso-

lute clearness, yet his failure to repeal the teaching of the Abrahamic covenant does. Place the history before you. The children of believers have always been members of the kingdom of God; and the thought of their possible exclusion may never have entered the mind of a Jew. The Jewish world are summoned to prepare for a new dispensation of this kingdom. These parents bring their children, wearing the mark of present membership, to seek for them the blessings of the Head of the new administration. He proclaims, in their hearing, to all who surround him: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." If the language of the Saviour, apart from its connection, did not incontrovertibly establish the doctrine of infant membership, the circumstances of the case more than supply its lack of explicitness. It is a rule in the construction of language, that words are always to be understood in the sense in which the speaker knows that the hearer will understand them. These parents! consider the customs of their country and their religious education on the one hand, and their state of anxious inquiry concerning the prospects of their children, which the spirit of the times called for, on the other, and what possible interpretation could they have put upon the Saviour's conduct and language, other than this: "Whereas your children have been hitherto distinguished from the children of the heathen by visible adoption into God's family under the Abrahamic covenant, so shall it be with them in the kingdom of heaven?"

Shortly anterior to the ascension of the Saviour, he delivered to his disciples the memorable apostolic commission in this language: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. xxviii. 19. By this commission, who are the subjects of baptism? Clearly those

who are taught. Go teach the nations—baptizing them; baptizing—the taught. What is the teaching here commanded? The meaning cannot be mistaken. The Greek word μαθητεύσατες expresses this idea precisely,—"Causing to be discipled." The general idea is involved in the common Gospel address, "Believe and be baptized;" "Repent and be baptized," for repentance and faith are marks of discipleship. There are other terms, however, which more precisely express the import of the word *teach* in this passage. From Judaism and heathenism go *convert* the nations to Christianity. There is still another word, if possible, more exactly synonymous with the capital term in the commission, "Go ye, therefore, and *proselyte* the nations, baptizing them," &c., "Go bring them over to the spiritual and practical adoption of my religion." It may be advanced, therefore, as an incontrovertible truth taught in this passage, that Christ required his apostles to baptize those whom they had discipled—those whom they had proselyted. The question returns upon us with increased responsibility. What exactly in this commission did Christ mean that his apostles should do when he commanded them to disciple—to proselyte the nations? A well-established principle of interpretation settles with perfect precision the proper reply to this question. Language is always to be understood in view of the sentiments and usages of the party speaking and the party addressed. Jesus and his apostles were Jews. The opinions and the practices of the Jews in regard to proselyting, must, therefore, fix decisively the meaning of this passage. Who doubts this? Every man knows that things are not formed to fit words, but words are chosen to express things. The word *proselyte*, therefore, must come to the then prevalent practice of the Jews for its signification. For certainly we perpetrate the most violent absurdity, if we attempt to force the ancient practice of the Jews into conformity to any independent notion which we may choose to

entertain of the meaning of the word. The matter of proselyting among the Jews, what was it? What did they do when they proselyted the stranger to Judaism? The answer is this,—they proselyted him by the act of circumcision. Who were the parties circumcised when proselytism was practised by the Jews? The answer is at hand. The parties circumcised were always *the children with the parents*, and this was an every-day fact with which Jesus and his apostles and all the Jews were perfectly familiar. Jennings lays down the doctrine thus: "In proselyting, two things are observable—1. That when a man becomes a proselyte all his males were to be circumcised as well as himself; whereby his children were admitted into the visible church of God on his right as a father."* So say all the authorities. The idea of including the parents, in teaching the nations, but excluding the children, for aught we know, never once entered the mind of speaker or hearer.

Concede that this text does not establish the doctrine of infant baptism with unquestionable certainty, still the Savious's omission under these circumstances to guard his apostles against the baptism of infants, affords, in connection with the words themselves, a strong argument. The history of the nation, the practice of the heathen, the universal opinions and habits of men in their day, imperatively constrained the apostles, in the absence of the slightest countermanding word from Christ, to carry out baptism in the new dispensation precisely as they had carried out circumcision in the old. That is, they must baptize the children as well as the parents.

Once more. Does not the silence of the Jews, concerning Christ's doctrinal treatment of their children, constitute of itself a standing triumph over all objections to our faith and practice?

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* Jewish Ant., vol. i. 132.

Call up Jewish faith respecting the position and the prospects of their children. They believed that God's hand had placed them in the bosom of the Church. The evidence was this. They saw their children by divine authority wearing the sign and the seal of God's covenanted adoption. They felt of course assured of their salvation. Once convince the Jews, therefore, that this divine mark had been obliterated from the persons of their children by God's command, and you have forced into their minds the further conviction, that God had thrown out their children unsealed among the heathen, and doomed them to a common destruction with his enemies. Such a proclamation from the lips of Jesus would have inflicted a sudden and frightful shock upon the very deepest feeling that slumbered in the land of Judea. It would have struck a blow upon the heart of the nation, which must have roused and heaved the people, as no other movement within the compass of created agency could have done. It would have waked up an outburst which had stormed up and down that land with continually augmenting violence and vengeance. But who ever heard the very first lisp of an objection by any Jew against the Saviour's doctrinal treatment of the children of the Church? Oh, our brethren may rest assured, that Christ never uttered such a faith as theirs in the land of Judea. No, never!

Call up the heart of the Jew toward the Son of God. The moment Christ stood up on earth the mediator between God and man, he assumed a stand exactly, inexorably fatal to all the political, ecclesiastical, and spiritual claims and prospects of the Jewish nation. His teaching, character, and agency never failed to reach their souls in precise and deadly antagonism to all they nationally thought, felt, and hoped. The Jews, therefore, deeply realized one thing, that to put down Jesus was vital to the rescue of their polity from impending destruction. Jesus, too, had such power in his countenance, spirit, and speech; such authority in all their

history, prophecy, and types; such witnesses in saints, angels, and devils; such coworkers in his own miracles, their own consciences, and the spirit of God, that, to destroy him they felt to be their only refuge against an embodied terrific foreboding, set up by righteous wrath to appal their spirit before the time. Nor must we forget that the Jews were sick unto death of their multiplied, unavailing, humiliating, agonizing conflicts with the Son of God. His calm and lucid teachings had triumphantly vindicated all God's assaulted words and ways, and laid before their own eyes and the world all their own irreverence, injustice, and hypocrisy; all their perversions, abominations, and rebellions. Exasperated to the last degree by this terrible discipline, the governing mind of Judea could now bear him no longer. They thirsted for his blood. They resolved to shed it. They sought again and again to do so. They were chafed to distraction by their failures. They could not sufficiently destroy his popularity with the people. At length, lashed to desperation, in solemn conclave they upbraid each other and cry out, "What do we? We prevail nothing. The world is gone after him. If we let him thus alone, the Romans will come and take away our place and nation." Had that eminent personage, who ever carried about him such dread testimonies of God's present authority, but once solemnly exclaimed, "Henceforth the sign and seal of God's covenant of adoption, in all the children of this land, by God's authority, I cancel forever," who, who can imagine the explosion that must have instantly followed! Parental affection from one end of the land to the other—oh, how sincerely agonized! how vindictively, fiercely, fired! What would not such a feeling have done? *Jewish frenzy*, too, to put down the power of Jesus—for years to its wit's end, it had toiled, and plotted, and menaced, and failed to lay hold of one solitary charge that could avail to turn the tide of popular vengeance against him; with what an agony of

relief and triumph they had instantly seized this teaching of the Son of God and proclaimed it to the people. Are we now to be told that the heart of the Jewish nation could have listened to the authoritative abolition of the most precious provision of the Abrahamic covenant from the mouth of its mortal foe, without one faint note of remonstrance? without one feeble murmur of opposition? without one single effort to turn it to his disadvantage? without one solitary syllable of response? If, in all the story of their fault-finding, there is not one sentence, not one word, projected against the abrogation of their children's bill of rights in the Abrahamic covenant, rest assured of it, that bill of rights has never been repealed! Rest assured of it, Jesus never taught your doctrine—never held your faith! No, never!

Secondly, It is affirmed that the face of the Scriptures discountenances the doctrines of infant baptism.

The subject of baptism, it is alleged, is repeatedly brought up in the Gospel, the party to be baptized is frequently spoken of, but it is written nowhere either that infants were baptized, or that they should be.

The objection, analyzed, will be found to advance nothing new. We respond, however, that the face of the Scriptures is just what it should be to teach our doctrine.

If an examination be made, it will be seen that the impressions upon this subject arise from an oversight of this one great truth—the unity of the Church in both dispensations. Rather depreciating the Old Testament, and considering the Gospel very much as a new religion, our brethren have refused to receive the doctrine of the baptism of infants, for this reason mainly, because it is not laid down in the Gospel with that distinctness, which, in their judgment, should mark the bearing of a new ordinance. But to suppose that there can be two religions is the grandest error mind can commit. All that makes up religion is always

the same. Indeed the practice of Jesus and the apostles, to refer to the Old Testament as the grand depository of all instruction and authority upon questions of New Testament doctrines, clearly establishes the unchangeableness of the Church through all dispensations. Now the nature of the Church, once understood, decides the interpretation of the Scripture, in regard to it.

If the Gospel is indeed a new religion, we have a right to require that infant baptism shall stand out clearly revealed on its pages. But if the Church is one in both Testaments, then we are not permitted to discard a doctrine, simply because a certain portion of the word of God does not seem to set it forth with unquestionable clearness. The fact is, that the tenor of God's word, wisely examined, both in the Old Testament and in the New, will be found to teach our doctrine precisely as we should have expected.

If the church is one, then

1. *Foundations lie in the Old Testament; republication, explication in the New.*

Every element of the constitution of the Church of God we have found grouped together in the Abrahamic covenant. The Gospel, therefore, is not a laying down of new foundations. The old, the eternal, the immutable foundations had been put down long before. So far as its novelties are concerned, the Gospel is but the new weather-boarding of the old fabric, the new dress of the old body. In view of this truth, how perfectly natural is the face of the Scriptures! The new edition of the old covenant does indeed republish and explain with more or less clearness and fulness, every essential element of the Church; but it takes care to keep us apprised that these are matters already made known in the prior revelation.

Now, if foundations lie in the old economy, how unreasonable it is to interpret New Testament statements con-

cerning the frame-work of the Church, as though nothing had been settled upon the subject before?

2. Much of the teaching of the New Testament touching the essentials of religion, we should expect just such as would be addressed to a party supposed to have been previously pretty fairly instructed.

If the Church, of necessity, must be one and the same in both dispensations, since the Old Testament has already laid down first principles, the language of subsequent exposition will very naturally be sometimes sententious—by allusion—incomplete. In a word, it will be such teaching as presupposes that there are things pertinent to the proper understanding of the words of the teacher already in the mind of the party addressed; such teaching as will expect the pupil to interpret things spoken in the light of things previously taught. The face of the New Testament, it will not be denied, abounds in just such presentations of truth. How unreasonable it is, therefore, to interpret an apparent lack of fulness of teaching in the Gospel, as deciding a question respecting the structure of the Church, without consulting what had been previously revealed upon the same point in its original organization!

3. On all points radical to the structure of the Church, we should be satisfied to find the Gospel a fair reflection of the old economy.

On some points, New Testament expositions will be fuller and clearer; on others, they will rely more largely upon the foundations previously established. On the whole, the New Testament Church, with greater or less distinctness, will carry out in every particular the essential stipulations of the Abrahamic covenant. So that he who has seen the face of God's religion in the Old Testament, will recognise its image in the New. Certainly the face of God's word bears out this last inference from the unity of the Church.

What difference do we find between the features of the

Old Testament and the New, respecting the precise point under discussion? What was the Church of God of old, in *composition?* Of old, the kingdom, in part, was obviously composed of little children. "Of such" little children, says the Saviour, "is the kingdom of heaven" in our day. Matt. xix. 14. In *covenant description of the parties?* Of old, the covenant promise was addressed expressly "to you and to your children." In our day, Peter says, expressly, "The promise is to you and your children." Acts ii. 39. In general *description of the seed?* Of old, an uncircumcised child was styled *unclean*—a circumcised child, *holy*. In the New Testament, also, the child of the unbeliever is called *unclean*—the child of the believer, *holy*. 1 Cor. vii. 14. In the *visible process of introduction?* Of old, church-members were often introduced by families. "Thou and thy seed, and he that is born in the house, and he that is bought with thy money." Gen. xvii. 10–12. So in the New Testament. Though the recorded cases of baptism are few in number, and greatly abbreviated in history, yet a part of them were by household. Acts xvi. 15. "And when she (Lydia) was baptized, and her household." Acts xvi. 33. "And was baptized, (the jailor,) he and all his, straightway." 1 Cor. i. 16. "And I baptized, also, the household of Stephanas." Finally, one thing preeminently marked the child of the believer under the old dispensation: he received in his person the sign and the seal of the covenant which his father made with God. Baptize the child of the Church in our day, and we complete the parallel between the teachings of the Old Testament and the New on this subject. Where, then, is the argument founded on the face of the Scriptures? In the light of the oneness of the Church in both dispensations, does not the word of God teach the church-membership of infants in the most natural manner conceivable?

Thirdly, it is said, that faith is the scriptural pre-

requisite of baptism, and therefore the ordinance should not be administered to infants.

It impairs the force of this assumption to reflect that there is no such essential peculiarity in faith as constitutes a special fitness for the ordinance. Baptism is the badge of Christianity; and since the nations must turn from some form of false religion to reach it, it is natural that faith should present itself as the representative of that Christianity which the ordinance demands. Let it be recollected, too, that the Scriptures express qualification for the ordinance in the use of other terms: "Then said Peter, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you.'" Acts ii. 38. Again: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we." Acts x. 47. Nor should we forget that the Abrahamic covenant is substantially the Christian Church. Nothing can be more unreasonable, therefore, than to attempt to settle the membership of the Church without the slightest reference to its constitution.

But we remark more directly, that it overthrows this objection to examine the prominent scriptural authority upon which it is based. It is said, that the very sentence from the lips of the Saviour, which originated the ordinance of baptism, confines its administration to those who believe: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." By this interpretation of the text, of every creature, those only who believe are to be baptized. The pertinency of this Scripture is a little ambiguous. There are two classes of the human family—the adult and the infant. The preaching of the Gospel is applicable to the one—not to the other. The common sense of the passage would rather seem to be this: "Of every

creature to whom I send you to preach the Gospel, he only that believes shall be baptized." The irrelevancy of the text, however, is not the principal difficulty. The structure of the passage is fatal to the interpretation advanced. Here are two parts of one sentence, addressed to the same person. If the first part of the sentence is addressed to the infant, so is the second. If it is held, therefore, that the infant's lack of faith, by the first section, unfits him for baptism, it must be held, also, that the infant's lack of faith, by the second section, fits him for damnation.

But, surely, this is not divine teaching. Behold the child! He has great natural interests, but cannot look to them. God, in nature, appoints the parent the trustee of the child. He has great social interests, but cannot protect them. Here, too, universal human consent permits the parent to do for the child what he cannot do for himself. He has still more important spiritual interests, and we know that God often requires the parent to represent the child here also.

But bend your thoughts upon this remarkable historical fact. In the formation of the Church, God himself did set apart the parent to act for his child. *Circumcision* was the act whereby faith was expressed in the first Church covenant. Therefore God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself. He did so, and thus expressed his faith. *Circumcision* must, of course, express the faith of the child under the same covenant. But the child cannot circumcise himself. What is to be done? God settles this question. He commands the parent to act for his child and circumcise him. Accordingly, as by the circumcision of himself, Abraham expressed faith for himself, so by the circumcision of his child, Abraham expressed faith for his child. The Abrahamic covenant is the New Testament Church! If God,

in the former, required the parent to act for the child and express his faith, God, in the latter, requires the parent to do the same.

Should there still hang about the mind an impression that the faith of the subject should be personal, there is a teaching in the Scriptures which should satisfy it. Baptism expresses faith, it is true, but circumcision also expresses faith, for God built this ordinance purposely, that it might be a distinguished sign of faith. Rom. iv. 11. If then, scripturally, faith is necessary to baptism, scripturally, faith was just as necessary to circumcision. Yet circumcision, "a seal of the righteousness of faith," was scripturally administered to the infant. Where lies the very slightest scriptural difficulty in the last case which was not scripturally removed in the first? If the incapacity of the infant to believe did not, in ancient times, prevent his being circumcised on the strength of his father's faith, why should the incapacity of the infant to believe, in modern times, forbid his being baptized on the same basis; especially in view of the fundamental fact, that, in founding his Church, God commanded the parent to act for the child?

If our readers will attend to two points, they will see how the Almighty addresses the conscience of parents on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant:

I. *The Abrahamic covenant, in its substance, is a valid covenant in our day.*

We shall not go over the arguments already adduced to establish this truth. The apostle's climax is all we shall repeat: "Though it were a man's covenant, it should not be disannulled, yet this is the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ."

II. *The application of the sign and the seal to the children of believers in the Abrahamic covenant is not matter of form, but of substance.*

"This is my covenant. Every male child among you shall be circumcised." What is important in a covenant beyond parties, obligations, influence?

1. *Parties.* You covenant with a hundred men. If we so interpret your deed as to throw out fifty of the parties, is this an unimportant modification of your contract? Have we left the substance of your deed untouched? On the contrary, is any thing more important in a covenant than its parties? Put some other person in the place of Him who so kindly covenants with man in the patriarchal interview, and have you not substantially altered the covenant? The parties to the Abrahamic covenant, on man's side, you know, are believers and their seed. Abolish the application of the sign and seal to the seed of the believer, and you throw out of the covenant more than half of its original parties. Whatever may be our opinion of the matter, we apprehend that both the world above and the world below adjudge this a very serious change in the substance of the covenant.

2. *Obligations.* You affect the obligations of the parties just as seriously. Obligation relates to two things—the act to be performed, and the moral force which impels to the performance. The Scriptures command all parents to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord; and all children to honour and serve their Maker. The application of the sign and seal of the covenant to the seed of the contractor does not affect the obligation of the parties, so far as respects the services to be rendered. But it greatly augments their obligation, in view both of the kind and of the degree of the moral force which binds to the duty. Surely God's general word, enjoining upon

parents the pious education of their children, creates the most solemn obligation. But when God calls the parent before his very face; spreads before him his solemn duty to his children; makes him solemnly swear that he will be faithful; compels him to affix both his signature and his seal to the vow; and, finally, dismisses him, well-assured that he leaves all this upon record in God's house until the day of reckoning,—who will dare to say that such a transaction contributes no additional obligation? Again: When God, as it were by his own hand, writes on the very body of the child a solemn oath,—that this person is sacred to God, and that he will serve him forever,—ere long, when time makes known to his adult years, that it was God himself who had caused that oath of consecration to be religiously inscribed upon his person,—who will dare to say that the party is, nevertheless, authorized to consider this whole procedure as a senseless formality, and that respect for God does not require him to take the slightest notice of that personal claim to his heart and service so emphatically asserted by the God who made him?

3. *Influence.* If there is one additional thing important to a covenant, it is this: *It should possess dignity enough to influence the parties to do their duty.* The application of the token to the children of the Church, is well calculated to wield a vast power in securing fidelity to the covenant. That solemn act of all the good men and women of the world, whereby they enter God's house, and there sign and seal, in God's presence, their solemn vow that they will be faithful to their children,—who can believe that this religious vow will exert no influence over their parental fidelity? That merciful act of God, whereby he meets them with his own signed and sealed pledge of gracious countenance and co-operation in their most arduous, anxious

task,—who can believe that this sacred pledge will never encourage them in moments of despondency, nor rouse them to renewed prayer and toil when faith had almost failed? Who can believe that the well-educated children of the Church will neither feel that their solemn dedication to God, by his direction, lays them under obligation to serve him; nor take encouragement, in the hour of honest struggle, from God's formal pledge of saving assistance? In a word, the application of the token of the covenant to the seed of the pious, levies contributions upon every power of every parent and child of God's Church, and calls out the combined strength of all, through every moment of life, to build up God's kingdom in the world. Assuredly there will be a vast shortcoming of universal, adequate response to this appeal, but it is just as certain that this very appeal will secure a vast increase of holy power to the cause of Christ in the world.

And, now, we expect our brethren, in Christian integrity, to stand by us and say, If there is any one thing in the Abrahamic covenant which is matter of substance, and should stand and be enforced in our day, *it is the obligation to do now what God commanded to be done of old, even the infixing of the blessed token of divine adoption upon the child, as well as upon the parent.*

Under the administration of early times, such a spectacle was scarcely ever seen in the Church of God, as a parent whose child did not carry the sign of God's covenant of adoption. Whenever such an unhappy object was found, that child was instantly cut off from God's family. But the Abrahamic covenant is the Christian Church. The Abrahamic covenant is in full force. We leave it a question for the consciences of our brethren,

How is it that your children are wandering abroad upon the earth without the mark of God's covenant of mercy? How is it that you, as Christian men, have never recorded your vow in the temple of the Lord, to do a parent's part by them?

THE END.

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PHILADELPHIA.

Presbyterianism Explained.

THE ministry of the Presbyterian Church rarely dwell, in their public addresses, upon the government, the order, or the peculiarities of their Church. Looking for the success of their labours rather in the prevalence of those great truths which are contained in the Scriptures and in the Confession of Faith, than in the inculcation of denominational peculiarities, they seldom discuss in their pulpits Presbyterianism as a system. It is the kernel, not the well-wrought shell, the jewel, not the casket, that mainly attracts their attention and awakens their zeal. It thus happens that many of the members of Presbyterian churches have but indistinct notions of the characteristic features of the ecclesiastical body with which they are connected, whilst the members of other churches are almost entirely ignorant of its system. It is not strange that the excellencies of Presbyterianism should often be but imperfectly appreciated by its sons and entirely misapprehended by strangers.

A brief and simple answer to the question, "WHAT IS PRESBYTERIANISM?" will meet a want often felt by the ministers of our Church, and cannot fail to prove gratifying to our people. The excellencies of the system leave little need for eulogy, and obviate any necessity for intolerant attacks upon other evangelical bodies. To explain Presbyterianism is its best commendation. Its principles are its highest eulogy.

The Church of Christ is a divinely-constituted

social organization. In its highest signification it embraces all true Christians. In this sense it is styled "The Church catholic," or *universal*. The Church catholic, however, though spiritually one, is not one in its visible organizations. It is divided by geographical localities, by doctrinal views, or by differing forms of government. The churches of England, Germany, Sweden, and other lands, are separated by national landmarks. In particular countries a diversity of opinion upon points of faith or order leads to denominational organizations.

That portion of the Church catholic, or universal, with which we are connected, and which commands our preference, is denominated "*The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.*"

The first feature of our Church which attracts attention is the SCRIPTURAL AND LIBERAL CHARACTER OF ITS GOVERNMENT.

The foundation of the whole structure lies in the people. With them, as found united in the particular churches or congregations of which the body is composed, originates the authority by which it is governed. The power does not descend from above downward, as in despotisms, but from the people upward, as in representative governments. Each individual member has a voice in the election of the officers of the church with which he is connected. Each church has its own rights guarded, as a member of the body, and its own voice in every question of discipline or doctrine. Regulated by a constitution, law cannot grow into despotism, nor liberty into license. Law and liberty mark every point of the Presbyterian polity.

In the government and care of the Church there is found a threefold division of office. Two of these—the *ministry* and the *ruling eldership*—have respect to the

spiritualities, the third—the *deaconship*—to the temporalities and the benevolence of the Church.

The first element in this system is *the ministry*,—that class known in our form of government as ministers or bishops. Of the clergy we maintain that *they are all equal*, and that their authority is derived from Christ himself. We agree with Archbishop Whately that "the sacramental virtue," (a thing the existence of which we deny,) even if it were transmitted from apostolic hands, and through them to their successors, cannot be shown to have had an unbroken descent down to our times. Yet there has doubtless been a succession of an order of men, denominated Christian ministers, each generation of which has been approved by the generation immediately preceding them; and in this way the ministry may be traced back, as the Church itself can be, to the immediate disciples of our Lord. In this respect the Presbyterian Church stands upon a full equality with those who lay a greater stress upon the value of an apostolical succession. But the authority of the ministry is derived directly from Christ. The Christian minister is called of God to his work. When the Spirit has called a man to this holy office, the Church echoes the voice of her Lord. The candidate presents himself, and the ministry, or the Presbytery, which represents the whole body, ordain him and receive him into their number and fellowship.

Consistently with these views, the *perfect parity* or *equality of the clergy* is maintained. Each pastor is bishop of the church over which he presides. None is set as a superior over his brethren. Like the bishops of the churches mentioned in the New Testament, he is the brother and equal, not the lord, of his fellow-presbyters. If one minister possesses more

influence than another, it is only as one private member of the Church exercises a greater influence than some of his brethren. It is because he possesses a greater degree of learning, or more distinguished gifts, or a more heavenly piety. We hold that in the ministry we have but one master,—that Christ is our Bishop, and "all we are brethren." The ministry thus constituted is the primary element in the government of our Church. They are charged with the preaching of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the oversight of the flocks committed to them.

Another element is that of *ruling elders*. In enumerating the several denominations of persons in the Church on whom its edification depended, the Apostle Paul names, as distinct from various classes of teachers by him specified, one which he calls "governments." In another place he speaks of elders who "ruled" without "labouring in word and doctrine." These officers we denominate ruling elders. This class is one distinctly recognised by early Christian fathers as in the Church. It corresponds with a similar class of officers in the Jewish synagogues in the days of the apostles.

It is evident that the object of these officers was the spiritual edification of the people. "They were intended to instruct them in the knowledge of divine truth, to inspire them with pure principles and spiritual affections, to form their individual and social habits to practical holiness and moral order: in one word, to render them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

While such is the object of the ministry and eldership, the pastor or bishop of the congregation, and the elders who have been elected by the people and

solemnly set apart to the office, together constitute the *primary court* of the Church. Of this court the pastor is moderator or president, and one of the elders is appointed by themselves as secretary. The body thus constituted is denominated the CHURCH SESSION. It is charged with the duty of providing for the instruction of the congregation, the religious training of the young, and the discipline of erring members. It is governed in its proceedings by a code of laws adopted by the whole Church, and is required to keep a written record of its proceedings, which record is subject to the review and control of a superior court. It has power to admit members to the communion of the Church, to exculpate and protect those who are unjustly accused, to admonish such as may be reasonably expected to be reclaimed by gentle means, to suspend from the communion of the Lord's Supper gross offenders, and to sever incorrigible members from their connection with the church.

In cases of church discipline every trial is open and public. A fair record is required to be kept of all the proceedings; and parties interested are entitled to a copy, at their request, without charge, save only the expense of transcribing. If, through the imperfections or bias of this court or any part of it, any person feels himself aggrieved by its decisions, he has the right of appeal to the Presbytery.

Thus, cases of discipline are not brought before the whole church, to create a scandal which might often be greater than the original evil, but come before a body of judicious men, men of godliness and experience, chosen by the church for this purpose. And, should any local prejudice interfere with justice, an appeal is open to a larger and more impartial tribunal.

The Presbyterian form of government also recog-

nises the office of *deacons*. To them properly appertain the care of the charities of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the management of its temporal affairs. In many places this office has fallen into disuse. It may be that the resuscitation and wise use of the deaconship would relieve the spiritual officers of the churches from cares not properly belonging to them, and preserve them from present temptations "to leave the word of God and serve tables."

The Presbytery is the first court above the Session of the individual church. In it, as well as in the Session, is found the great principle of the government of the Church, not by the clergy alone, but by the ministers and the people as represented in the elders. Each Presbytery is composed of the bishops or ministers of several neighbouring churches, and one ruling elder from each church of the Presbytery. Its duties are most important. It serves both as a bond of union to the several churches, and as a court of appeal to each of their Sessions. Meeting semi-annually, the state of religion in the churches is passed in review. The records of Sessions are examined, that any injustice or irregularity may be rectified. Here, candidates for the ministry are examined and ordained, and ministers, if accused, are tried, and acquitted or sentenced to suspension or deposition. By the Presbytery, pastors, when called, are installed over churches, or, when circumstances demand, are released from the pastorate. Delegates appointed from the Presbytery, both from the ministers and ruling elders, constitute the General Assembly; and no act of the Assembly can become a law until ratified by a majority of the Presbyteries of which it is composed.

The Synod is a union of several Presbyteries, and is a court of appeal from the individual Presbyteries

comprised in it. It holds to the Presbytery very much the relation held by the Presbytery to the church Session. It serves also as a medium through which many religious enterprises may be carried forward which could not be sustained by single Presbyteries. In it each minister has a seat, and an elder from each church. The Synods meet annually.

The General Assembly is the highest of our Church courts. It is a representative body, consisting of ministers and elders in equal numbers, chosen by the Presbyteries, one minister and one elder from each Presbytery, except when the Presbytery numbers more than —— members. Its sessions are held once each year, and each Assembly is composed of "commissioners" chosen anew each year by the Presbyteries. As is the case with Senators in most of the United States, the members of the General Assembly are appointed by the people through their delegates. As the highest court of the Church, it is the final adjudicator of appeals. The Assembly decides also in controversies as to doctrine and discipline, bears testimony against error and immorality in any church, Presbytery, or Synod, and superintends the concerns of the whole Church. To the Assembly belongs also the promotion of projects for the extension of the gospel at home and abroad and for the advancement of the cause of truth, righteousness, and holiness. It is a type of the unity of the Church, and a visible expression of the responsibility of each particular church to the whole. It is also a bond of union between the local churches, by which they are made strong for the conflict with sin and Satan. It is a federal union, like that of our sovereign States, by which the steadiness and power of a great body are attained without the

sacrifice of the rights or liberties of the parts of which it is composed.

It is not pretended that we have an apostolical warrant for these four courts constituted in this exact form. But we do maintain that the principles involved in this organization are all found in the primordial Church as described incidentally in the New Testament. The parity of Christian ministers is plainly asserted. Bishops and elders, or presbyters, are acknowledged by all scholars to be the same. The same persons are in different places called by each of these names. There were elders that ruled well who did not labour as preachers. The churches consisting of different congregations acted in unison; and assemblies representing the whole were convened to concert measures for promoting the general good.

Such a government is eminently popular and liberal. No man can be tried but by his peers. If prejudice has unfortunately been permitted to exercise sway, the injured party can remove the cause to a higher and an impartial tribunal. No great interest can be sacrificed by the tyranny of an individual raised high in office above his brethren. The dangers of ecclesiastical ambition are diminished by the representation of the people in the eldership; and by the union of the two elements the judgment and temper of each is improved. The Constitution of our Church throughout is remarkably like that of our confederate Republic, and is admirably adapted to the genius of our people. Whilst eminently scriptural in its principles, it is also eminently liberal, wise, and safe.

The Presbyterian Church IN ITS WORSHIP is marked by *simplicity and a close adherence to Scripture precedent.*

The public worship of God in the Presbyterian Church is not conducted by a prescribed liturgy. The

liberty of extemporaneous prayer is restricted by no forms. The heart of the pastor, fresh from the closet and from intercourse with his flock, leads the devotions of the congregation. Every circumstance of his people—their wants, their sorrows, their cares, their fears—may enter into the worship of God's house. It cannot be supposed that liturgies were used in apostolic times. No one can believe that Paul kneeled down on the shore, when he parted with his friends at Tyre, and read a prayer from a book, or that Paul and Silas used a prescribed form when they prayed at midnight in the prison at Philippi. "The Lord's Prayer" forms no objection to our usage, because it is not given in the same words by the different evangelists, as it doubtless would have been had it been intended as a prescribed form. Besides, it contains no clause asking for blessings in the name of Christ, which our Saviour himself solemnly enjoined upon his Church before he withdrew his personal presence. In the subsequent inspired history we find no allusion to this form of prayer, nor any reference to either *saying* or *reading* of prayers,—both of which modes of expression are natural for those who employ precomposed forms.

In forming the "Directory of Public Worship," our Church regards the Holy Scriptures as the only safe guide: therefore she does no more than to recommend a judicious arrangement of the several parts of the public service, throwing upon the pastor the responsibility of preparing himself for a proper and edifying performance of those acts of worship which shall be suited to the ever-changing wants of the congregation.

In ITS TEACHINGS the Presbyterian Church addresses itself alike to the mind and the heart.

We believe that instruction is the great instrument

of Christianity. Our Saviour is the light of the world, and men are sanctified through the truth. We believe that worship and a due cultivation of the religious sensibilities are vastly important, but that just conceptions of the plan of salvation, and a clear view of the principles by which men ought to be governed, are of primary consequence, as indispensable to securing a right *quality* of worship and real acceptance with God.

Hence we aim at securing the most thorough education of the Christian ministry. There is not a more thoughtful and manly class of writers—writers that think more profoundly and discuss great questions more earnestly—than the pastors of our Church. We are accused of being too intellectual, and of neglecting too much appeals to the feelings of our congregations. It may be that we are chargeable with neglect. Certain it is that we do not possess the warmth which such a cause and such a Master may properly demand. But, still, we claim that an increase of devotional sentiment ought not to detract in the least from the acumen employed in our discriminations, or the earnestness of our discussions. If we do not appeal with sufficient warmth to the feelings of our people, the remedy is not to teach less clearly and earnestly. A more suitable exhortation for us is that of our Saviour:—"These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

The doctrines of the Presbyterian Church are Calvinistic. They are so called, not because Calvin invented them. They were the doctrines of all the leading Reformers,—of the Waldenses, for five or six hundred years before the Reformation,—of Augustine and the primitive Church; and especially are they distinctly exhibited in the word of God. This system

of doctrine is clearly set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

Without pretending to expound fully the great principles more amply unfolded in the standards of the Church, we may say, briefly, that the Presbyterian Church maintains, that since the fall of Adam, and in consequence of his lapse, all men are naturally destitute of holiness, alienated entirely from God, and justly subject to his eternal displeasure. The plan of man's recovery from this state is, from first to last, a system of unmerited grace. The mediation of Jesus Christ, including his instructions, his example, his sacrifice on the cross, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession, are the means of bringing men back to God. Yet these means would be without efficacy if there were not revealed to man a gratuitous justification through the merit of our Saviour's sacrifice, and if the Holy Spirit did not by his own invisible agency cause sinners to accept a free pardon and salvation. Hence the provisions of mercy are gratuitous, not only depending on the sovereign grace of God, but the disposition to accept these provisions is produced by a sovereign interposition of the divine Spirit.

It is evident, from Scripture and from daily obser vation, that all are not saved, and, consequently, that it was not the original purpose of Him who never changes his plans of operation, to bring all to repentance and faith in the Redeemer. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." "All the dispensations of his grace, as well as of his providence, and, amongst the rest, the effectual calling and salvation of every believer, entered into his plan from all eternity." "Yet so as that thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the

will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." That man is free as to his will, that a full provision for all men is made in the atonement, and that it is not the will of the Father that any should perish, is abundantly evident from the Scriptures. Jesus Christ is offered in the gospel as a full, free, and willing Saviour to all who repent and believe. Men perish because they will not come unto him that they might have life. For the false inferences drawn from scriptural doctrines by opponents, Presbyterians cannot be held responsible. The distinction between a doctrine and the inferences which men choose to draw from it is not to be overlooked.

In its Spirit, Presbyterianism is *unexclusive.* It may not be denied that Presbyterians have been guilty of acts of intolerance and tyranny; but such acts were a violation, not a result, of the spirit of the system. Presbyterianism unchurches no true Christian. It recognises, as of the Church, "*all those throughout the world* that profess the true religion, with their children." It never excludes the members of other evangelical churches from the privileges enjoyed by its own members and ministers. We count our brethren of other churches as members of the Church, and acknowledge them as members and ministers of the Church of Christ. While several of these churches decline giving letters of dismission from their communion to ours, we make no difference. We dismiss one of our members to a Baptist or an Episcopal church in precisely the same form and with the same affectionate confidence as though we were dismissing him to one of our own denomination. So, when we receive a member from another denomination, we never re-baptize him; nor do we

when we receive a minister re-ordain him. On the contrary, we practically acknowledge the ordinances of all evangelical churches as equally valid as if they had been performed by ourselves. We are as free and as cordial in asking a Baptist or an Episcopal clergyman to assist us officially in administering the Lord's Supper as in asking a pastor of one of our own churches. In hearty co-operation in Christian effort, it can at the very least be said that our own branch of the Presbyterian Church has been most liberal. It has withheld its counsels and its contributions from no worthy enterprise of a united benevolence.

We say this, not to excite invidious comparisons, but as a ground of thankfulness to God for the unexclusive spirit of the Church in which we are permitted to have our lot. Far from calling us to vain-glorying, these truths reprove us for our lukewarmness and sloth. Our privileges do but increase our responsibilities. God by his holy providence has given us a remarkable church organization and character. Those who have gone before us have exercised self-denial and zeal, and offered fervent prayer, as a means of enstamping such a character on our beloved Church. Yet, *as individuals*, we may neglect to honour and extend it. Nay, is it not true beyond controversy that we are very far from exercising the earnest zeal which we ought to put in requisition for its advancement? We believe that our Church is eminently scriptural and liberal in its government; we believe it to be remarkable for its unexclusive and anti-sectarian spirit; we believe that its worship is free and simple, and that its character as a teaching Church is high,—that it is earnest and thorough, intellectual and faithful, and that it unfolds those great doctrines which have always been "the

power of God unto salvation" with extraordinary fulness; and yet we are not doing by any means as much to extend its influence as we should do.

While we may justly continue our co-operation with sister churches in those religious enterprises in which a harmonious co-operation can be attained, do not consistency and fidelity demand that we awake to a new life in extending an organization so excellent and so blessed of God hitherto? Let us not deceive ourselves. Let us not flatter ourselves that if in our charity we aid others and neglect our own organization, our principles will spread of themselves. No! if this unsectarian, catholic spirit, and this simple worship, and pure doctrine and earnest mode of teaching, are worth any thing, they are worth defending and propagating,—not in a spirit of blind sectarianism, not in pharisaic proselytism, but with an enlightened, temperate, and liberal zeal, looking to God's glory in the salvation of men and the edification of the Church of Christ as the great end of all our efforts.

Let us cherish, then, a warm regard for that branch of the Church catholic with which we are connected. If our opportunities to do a blessed work for Christ and his cause are great and tempting, let us not be untrue to our responsibilities. Let us meet them in a spirit of humble zeal, resolved to do our whole duty to our glorious Lord. Our principles are right. But they must be set forth by us in the power of consistent lives and earnest maintenance. Then, in answer to our fervent prayers, the Lord will help us, and we shall be enabled to exclaim, "Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him, he will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

THE

OFFICE OF RULING ELDER.

THE object of this treatise is a practical one. It is not a discussion of the scriptural authority of the Ruling Eldership. But, with a brief statement of the grounds on which the claims of the Eldership to the regard of the Church are rested, it aims to present the nature and duties of the office, with the desire to aid in securing for it the highest measure of efficiency. In the prosecution of this purpose, the topic first claiming consideration is

THE WARRANT FOR THE OFFICE.

The Church of God is not simply an aggregate of individual believers in Christ. More truly, it is an *organized body*, composed indeed of individual members, each retaining his own personality, and made wise[1] for himself and not for another, yet all governed by common principles and animated by a common life.[2]

This body needs some form of government. Certainly the Church as it still is on the earth, in a progress towards completeness in the spiritual world, and now engaged in its ministry of reconciliation, must have some external organization and form of government. Without these, it can have no well-directed

[1] Prov. ix. 12. [2] Eph. iv. 4–6.

power in the earth, even if we could imagine it retaining an existence without them. Certainly without them all things cannot be done "decently and in order."

The Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme Head of the Church, from whom all authority is derived.[1] The Bible is the only rule of faith, and our only authoritative directory for government and worship. The canons and the rubric that have the sanction of the "chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls" are the only ones that are binding on our conscience. We hold, in the words of our confession, that[2] "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship."

To his ancient Jewish Church God gave very definite and precise rules for government and worship. But in the New Testament we do not find any distinct form of Church-government positively enjoined. Hence there may be honest differences of opinion on the subject of ecclesiastical polity, and no particular form and method of ruling the Church can be of binding authority. At the same time, certain leading principles may be discovered, to which all ought to conform.

The essential ideas of Presbyterianism, as a form of government, are the independence of the Church of any secular power or any ecclesiastical hierarchy; the parity of the ministry; the right of the people to elect their own church-officers and regulate their own affairs, subject to the law of Christ; the government of the church by elders, or officers elected from among

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[1] Matt. xxviii. 18; Ephes. i. 20–22, iv. 7–13. [2] Chapter xx. sec. ii.

the people, representing them, and solemnly ordained for this purpose; and the uniting of local or individual churches, by means of their officers, into general councils representing the Church at large, without legislative, but with advisory and judicial, authority.

Without claiming for Presbyterianism a prescriptive authority, we hold that it is abundantly sanctioned by the Scriptures and sustained by history. The government of the Church, as seen in the New Testament, was assigned to a distinct body of officers, set apart for that work from among the people themselves, and constituting collectively the Presbytery or Eldership. The Church at large being necessarily divided into local congregations or churches, each of these administered its affairs by its own officers; while there were occasional assemblages of these officers from a number of the churches in a given district, for purposes of consultation and the deciding of questions of general interest. These elders of the Church consisted of two classes: first, there were those whose office it was to preach the gospel, and to have the general care of the interests of the Church: these were the pastors, or the teaching *and* ruling elders. Secondly, there were those whose office it was to unite with the pastors in managing the affairs of the Church, without exercising the office of public teachers: these were the *ruling elders.*

It is a widely-held opinion that the early Christian churches, so far as they received any formal organization, were regulated after the model of the Jewish synagogue; not that the apostles purposely and deliberately took this as a model, but that, being familiar with it, they were naturally led by their Jewish habits and associations to construct their Christian organizations after this manner. In the

synagogue "there were certain men of reputation intrusted with the direction of the assembly, and called rulers," or elders, one of whom presided and officiated in the public assemblies. But the title and office of elder are of much older date than the synagogue, and formed a part of the established Jewish ecclesiastical system from the beginning down to the time of the apostles. And it is, not without reason, regarded by some as the one feature of ecclesiastical government designed by the supreme Head of the Church to be *perpetual*, while all else connected with the Jewish system was temporary and symbolical.[1]

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[1] "The office of Presbyter or Elder was the only permanent, essential office of the Jewish Church, and as such was retained under the new organization without any formal institution, and therefore without any distinct mention in the history, such as we find afterwards in reference to the organization of the Gentile Churches, where the office had no previous existence and must therefore be created by the act of ordination. (Acts xiv. 23.) This is a much more probable account of the institution of the Christian Eldership than that which derives it from the constitution of the Jewish Synagogue, which was itself probably of later date, and, as a separate organization, without divine authority."—*Alexander on Acts* xi. 30. See also the same on Acts vi. 9 and xiv. 23.

The following passages from Dr. Stuart Robinson's recent work on "*The Church of God*" are worthy of regard for their earnest and eloquent setting forth of his opinions on this point and some others involved in this discussion,—even though we may hesitate to concur with him entirely.

"While yet the two divine governmental institutions—the Church and the State—remained embosomed in the still earlier divine institution of the family, the power of rule delegated by the Great King to men was exercised by the patriarchs, or natural elders of the community. So soon as, under the covenant with Abraham chartering a distinct community of the chosen, such a community actually existed, as the shortening of human life no longer permitted a patriarchal rule, the Elders, as the successors of the patriarchs, are found intrusted with the Church visible. Before the national organization under Moses, there were Elders in charge of the covenant people; and to them must Moses

Without insisting on any divine ordinance regulating the matter, the apostles might readily, from the

exhibit the seals of his commission, as the authorized agent of the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, come to execute the stipulations of the ancient Covenant.* Through the Elders was given to the Church the ordinance of the Passover.† Before them as representatives of the Church was the typical rock smitten.‡ To the Church, through her Elders, after solemn preparation, were the revelations of Sinai made, and these in form of a solemn Covenant between Jehovah and his people.‖ The Elders partook with Moses of the solemn sacrificial feast in the mount, as preparatory to the reception of the ecclesiastical and ritual Constitution from Jehovah.§ The Elders, with the priests, constituted the supreme ecclesiastical tribunal to which all appeals should come.¶ Even in Israel under the apostasy the form of government was not lost sight of, but the Elders sat with Elisha.** So too even after the fall of the nation as such, the Elders met with God's prophet on the river Chebar.†† And in the wasted and corrupt Jerusalem, the form of Jehovah's appointed court of the Church survived all regard and fear of Jehovah, and a corrupt court of the priests and elders condemned to death his prophet Jeremiah for speaking the warnings of Jehovah.‡‡ When Messiah came to his own, and his own received him not, the regard for the divinely-appointed form of ecclesiastical government is found still surviving, though men made void the Divine Law through their traditions. Priests and Elders formed the council that condemned the Son of God. The Elders, under the dispensation of the Spirit, still occupy their position toward the Church, appointed by the Holy Ghost to take oversight as in the Church of old. And again, in the prophetic vision of the glorious Church of the future, John saw the great congregation, still in eternity as in time, represented by four-and-twenty elders,—twelve for the ancient and twelve for the new dispensation,—but one body, uniting together in casting their crowns, the symbol of their official authority, at the feet of Him whom they unite to acknowledge as Head and Source of all authority in the Church in all ages."—pp. 65-67.

"Now, the Scriptures exhibit, accordingly, this actual uniformity of government, by a series of tribunals representing the different extents of the meaning of the word 'Church,' as existing under every dispensa-

* Ex. iii. 15, 16; iv. 29-31.
† Ex. xii. 3, 21.
‡ Ex. xvii. 5, 6.
‖ Ex. xix. 7, 8; xxiv. 7, 8.
§ Ex. xxiv. 9, 11.
¶ Deut. xvii. 9-12.
** 2 Kings vi. 32.
†† Ezek. viii. 1.
‡‡ Jer. xxvi. 8, 17.

force of custom, and from the fitness of the thing itself, introduce such a form of government into the Christian Church; or it might seem to grow up naturally there, as those converted to Christ associated themselves for worship. At all events, we find that in the early Christian churches the government of affairs, and the conducting of public services, were intrusted to a number of men called *elders*, or *presbyters*, or *overseers*, or *bishops*,—for all these words are equivalent in scriptural usage, presbyter (or elder) and bishop being used interchangeably with reference to the same persons.[1]

There was in the primitive Church *a plurality of elders*, that is, several elders belonging to a single church. And it is a fair presumption that they were not all pastors or preachers. For why should several preachers or pastors be needed for a single church? And is it probable there could be found in every one

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tion. Elders and ministers of the word form their constituent elements,—and that in tribunals having jurisdiction of various degrees of extent, from a single community of worshippers up to that over the whole visible body. Such was the structure of the ecclesiastical tribunals, as distinct from the civil, under the first general organization of Moses;* such it appears in all the subsequent history whenever occasion calls for a reference to it.† Such we find it, beyond all controversy, at the opening of the New Testament,—as appears from the numerous allusions to the synagogue with its elders and chief ruler, and to the sanhedrim of chief priests, priests, and elders; and such, with scarce a single important modification, do we find the government of the Church under the apostles,‡ and so left as the perpetual order of government for the Church."—*Ib.* pp. 93–94.

[1] Compare Acts xx. 17 with verse 28; 1 Peter v. 1, 2. "*Overseer*" is the exact translation of the Greek word from which our word "bishop" is derived. The Greeks gave it as a title to officers sent into the provinces as *inspectors* of their condition.

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* Deut. xvii. 8–12. † 2 Chron. xix. 8–11. ‡ Acts xv.

of the churches several men with the requisite qualification for the pastoral office? For we must remember that the special gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased at the end of the apostolic age, and that thenceforth the Church was conducted by the wisdom of men under the ordinary guidance of the Holy Spirit. Besides, we find that there were individual pastors spoken of in connection with churches to which a plurality of elders is ascribed.[1] And is it not altogether most natural to suppose that while (after the manner of the apostles) one gave himself up to the ministry of the word, he had associated with him a number of judicious and earnest men, to aid him by their counsels and by sharing with him the responsibility of government? That such was the case after the time of the apostles, we have evidence in the writings of some of the fathers. But, glancing at a portion of the scriptural testimony on this point, we find a plurality of elders spoken of in several instances. For example, at Jerusalem,[2] where they are mentioned in distinction from the apostles and other members of the Church; and again "the elders" of the Church at Ephesus are spoken of.[3] The Apostle James (v. 14) writes to the sick to send for the elders of the church. Paul and Barnabas, on their return from their missionary tour, ordained elders in every church.[4] Titus is directed to ordain elders in every city.[5]

Now, observe that *we find a distinction made between the elders who teach and the elders who rule.* Thus, we find "helps," "governments," and "ruling" spoken of as distinct offices in 1 Cor. xii. 28, and Romans xii More explicitly we have this passage:—"*Let the elders*

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[1] Compare Rev. ii. 1 with Acts xx. 17. [2] Acts xi. 30, xv. 4, 6.
[3] Acts xx. 17. [4] Acts xiv. 23. [5] Titus i. 5.

who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine."[1] Here plainly two classes of elders are spoken of—elders who only rule well, and elders who both rule and labour in the word and doctrine; and this is exactly our modern distinction between ruling elders and pastors or ministers.[2]

This is an outline of the argument for the scriptural validity of the office of ruling elder. We believe this office is sanctioned by apostolic authority and by the example of the primitive Church. We believe that there were then men selected from the members of the church and associated with the pastor in the government and discipline of the church. And we see an advantage in such an institution, which, apart from its scripturalness, greatly commends it to our regard. The elders serve on the one hand to form a popular check on any attempt of the pastors or ministers to lord it over God's heritage, and on the other, to secure a more dispassionate and impartial administration of the interests of the church than if this were left to the popular assembly of the whole body of church-members. They are an invaluable board of counsel to the pastor, and are invested with such official relations to the congregation as give them opportunities for great usefulness.

Those who are familiar with this subject know how readily numerous authorities might be adduced to sustain these positions, and to show also the high estimate which good and wise men of other denominations than our own have formed of the eldership. We will cite only these words of the learned Dr. Owen and of Richard Baxter. Dr. Owen says, "To

[1] 1 Tim. v. 17. [2] See also 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 7.

the complete constitution of any particular church, or the perfection of its organical state, it is required that there be many elders in it,—at least, more than one." "With these elders the whole rule of the church is intrusted: all these, and only they, do rule it. Of these elders there are two sorts. The first sort doth rule, and also labour in word and doctrine. They are elders with the addition of pastoral or teaching authority. But there are elders which are not pastors or teachers. Elders that rule well, but labour not in the word and doctrine, are ruling elders only."[1] "And, besides what is expressly spoken concerning the appointment of this sort of elders in the Church, their usefulness, in the necessity of their work and employment, is evident."[2] Baxter, though declining to admit the divine institution of the ruling eldership, says, "My judgment is, that ordinarily every particular church (such as our parish churches are) had more elders than one, but not such store of men of eminent gifts as that all these elders could be such. But as if half a dozen of the most judicious persons of this parish were ordained to be elders of the same office with myself, but, because they are not equally fit for public preaching, should most employ themselves in the rest of the oversight, consenting that the public preaching lie most upon me, and that I be the moderator of them for order in circumstantials. This I think was the true episcopacy and presbytery of the first times."[3]

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[1] True Nature of a Gospel Church. Chap. vii. sec. 9, 13. Works, vol. xvi. pp. 112, 117.

[2] A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God. Q. 31. Works, vol. xv. p. 505.

[3] Quoted by Dr. Miller, "On Ruling Elders," chap. vii. pp. 148–149.

Let us look next at

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE OFFICE.

These may be expressed in the following proposition. *The Ruling Eldership is a spiritual office designed to secure the good order and healthy life of the Church.*

I. As to the NATURE OF THE OFFICE.—*The ruling eldership is a spiritual office.*

It is a spiritual office in the same sense in which the pastoral or ministerial office is spiritual. It is concerned directly with the maintenance and spread of religion, and with the life of religion in the souls of men. This we argue from the manner in which elders and pastors are spoken of under the same expressions; from the facts of their being solemnly ordained to their work, and joining in ordaining others; from the work which they seem to have performed in the early churches; and from the directions given them by inspired apostles.

1. In several cases in which bodies of elders are spoken of, it is impossible to show that both teaching and ruling elders are *not* meant, while the inference is a fair one that both are included: for example, in Acts xx. 28, the appointment of the elders is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, also Acts xv. 4; 1 Pet. v. 1, 2; 1 Tim. v. 17; Titus i. 5, *et seq.* In these cases they seem to be placed in the same category with ministers, though elsewhere specific duties are assigned to them. They may no more be regarded as *secular* officers, or called *officially* to a *secular* work, than the ministers; though as members of the church they may attend to secular matters.

2. They were solemnly ordained to their work by the laying on of hands. (Acts xiv. 23; Titus i. 5)

This denotes a specific setting apart to a solemn religious work,—not merely secular And though we cannot perhaps prove that ruling elders took part in the laying on of the hands of the presbytery in ordination, yet the contrary cannot be established. And it is altogether probable that they participated in the appointment of candidates for ordination, just as now with us they take part in examining and admitting candidates for the ministry, though custom has assigned the direct act of ordaining by the imposition of hands to the ministers.

If it be said that *deacons* were also set apart to their work by the laying on of hands, and they had to do with secular things, it is answered that we claim that the office of deacon is also spiritual in its nature, and that the secularities with which it is concerned are, so to speak, *spiritual* secularities. Specifically, they were originally appointed to take care of the poor, to collect and disburse the charities of the Church. They were not designed to attend to the revenues of the Church, to erect buildings and watch over what are now known as the *temporalities* of the Church. The first deacons were important helpers of the apostles and elders, and in the infancy of the Church doubtless did much in the way of preaching the gospel and spreading Christianity, some of them to that end being endowed with miraculous power.

3. As to the *specific work* which the elders performed in the early Church, we have few facts in Scripture to guide us. We find them addressed as managing the affairs of the Church,[1] commended as labouring for the spiritual welfare of the Church,[2] ruling the Church,[3] taking part in the councils of the Church,

[1] 1 Pet. v. [2] 1 Thess. v 12, 13; Heb. xiii. [3] Rom. xii.; 1 Cor. xii.

and associating with the apostles in mattters of interest and authority and in the exercise of discipline.[1] Only once, we believe, are they spoken of as concerned in a pecuniary matter, and that was their receiving from the hands of Barnabas and Saul a contribution sent from the Church at Antioch to the suffering Christians at Jerusalem.[2] But this was a religious act, a distribution of charity committed to them as the responsible representatives of the Church, or they may have simply received it and handed it to the deacons for distribution. All that we find concerning them shows theirs to be a *spiritual*, not a *secular* office.

4. If now we look at the *directions* given to the elders in the New Testament, the fact that theirs is a spiritual office is brought out more distinctly.

The address of the Apostle Paul to the Elders of the Church at Ephesus (Acts xx.) very fully indicates this. There can hardly be any reason to doubt that the ruling elders of the Church, as well as the pastors or teachers, are here addressed. How large the Church at Ephesus then was we do not know; nor do we know whether more than a single congregation were represented at this conference with Paul. But the language implies a number too large to be simply *ministers*, and is inappropriate if confined to them, though applicable to them in connection with others. "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and tempta-

[1] Acts xv. 2, 4, 6, 22, 23; xxi. 18–25. [2] Acts xi. 30.

tions which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and *have taught you publicly and from house to house.*" Again, "And now, behold, *I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God* shall see my face no more." This language surely implies more than a few ministers as the persons addressed. How many were present we do not know; but the probability is that they were quite a body, and all of them elders,—the elders of Ephesus,—those who ruled well and those who laboured in word and doctrine. Then follow these words, teaching the nature of their office, and enjoining on them their duty:—"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood;" and he closes his address with the words, "I have shown you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Now, an office to which the Holy Ghost appoints men, which relates to the care of the Church of God, which calls them to take the oversight of the Church from the love of souls and love to God, and to be examples to the flock,—such an office must surely be regarded as *spiritual* in its nature.

II. As to the DESIGN OF THE OFFICE.—*Its design is to secure the good order and healthy life of the Church.*

And, first, to secure the good order of the Church. Under the Jewish system, the elders exercised a wider authority than under the Christian, constituting a

judicial body, and to some extent a civil court. Still, their principal functions were ecclesiastical, regulating questions of order and discipline.

It is not a little remarkable that in the New Testament the lines which divide the province of one class of church-officers from that of another are so faintly drawn. This clearly indicates that in the infancy of the Church the apostles and brethren were more concerned with great fundamental principles than with formal organization, seeking the conversion of sinners and each others' edification, as co-equal brethren, all "a royal priesthood" uniting to worship God. It suggests, too, that the outworking of Christian principles found for themselves suitable and simple forms.

Besides the apostles, elders and deacons are mentioned; yet the word *deacons*, or deaconship, (diaconate,) we find applied to all three officers, and even to the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Still, upon examination, and using the light of subsequent history, we find that the teaching elders, or ministers, were intrusted with the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and general oversight of the spiritual condition of the Church; that the ruling elders, representing the Church, aided in the general government and oversight of the Church, as helps to the pastor and guardians of the people; while the deacons, so far as we can trace, were in one sense helpers of the pastor and elders, charged specifically with the charities, sometimes with the temporalities, of the Church.

The word "*governments*" implies that the office of Christian elders pertained to their regulating the order of the Church, as do the terms "*rule*" and

"*ruling*," which we find applied to them.[1] The same thing is clearly seen in Acts xx. 28. They are "*overseers*" of the flock, (perhaps better, *in* or *among* the flock, to denote that they are not exalted to an irresponsible and despotic authority over them.) They are to take the *oversight* of the flock, not as lords over God's heritage, but as examples to the flock. They are to "*feed*" the Church. The word here translated "feed," it is well known, includes the idea of *governing, directing.* It literally signifies *to perform the office of a shepherd;* and perhaps it is as often used to mean *rule* as *feed* or *teach.* It is translated *rule* in four out of five of the early English versions of the first of these passages, and *govern* in the fifth; while in the passage from Peter it is in all of them rendered by *feed.*[2] The word denotes the *care* of the flock: guiding, guarding, and supplying with suitable nourishment.[3] Hence we say that it is the design of the office of ruling elders *to take care of the Church,*—to see that all things be done decently and in order that pertain to the service of God and to the organization and action of the Church.

But, further than this, *They are to secure the healthy life of the Church.*

Not only the external order and discipline of the Church are committed to their charge, but the spiritual interests of the flock are to be attended to by them. "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased

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[1] Rom. xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17; Heb. xiii. 17.

[2] It is also translated *rule* in Matt. ii. 6; Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5; xix. 15.

[3] The word was used by classical writers to denote the rule of kings, and its corresponding noun to signify king, or governor.

with his own blood." The duty of public teaching and preaching devolves on the pastors or ministers of the Church; but conjointly with them are the elders responsible for the spiritual well-being of the flock. Their office calls them to watch over the members of the Church; to strengthen the weak; to reclaim the wandering; to see that each has a portion in due season; to preserve the purity of the Church; to judge of the fitness of candidates for church-membership; to administer discipline to erring or offending members; to secure a faithful adherence to covenant engagements in the observance of family worship, the regard for the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the religious training of children; to see that the people are instructed in sound doctrine, that the pulpit is supplied; and to bear part in the general councils of the Church, for the defence of the truth, the maintenance of Christ's kingship, and the extension of his kingdom.

The office of ruling elder is thus one of high spiritual character, and of solemn importance and responsibility. It is an office warranted by the divine Word, to which the Holy Spirit appoints men, and to which is intrusted very largely the care of the Church of God. Such seems to be clearly the teaching of the Scriptures concerning it. And such is the view taken in our Form of Government. "Ruling elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline in conjunction with pastors or ministers."[1] They are set apart to their work by solemn ordination, at which time, after approving and adopting the

[1] Chap. v.

Confession of Faith and Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church, they promise, among other things, "to study the peace, unity, and purity of the Church;" and the people promise "to yield them all that honour, encouragement, and obedience, in the Lord, to which their office, according to the word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles them."[1] In conjunction with the pastor, the elders constitute the *session* of a particular church, which Session "is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation, for which purpose they have power to inquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members of the church; to call before them offenders and witnesses, being members of their own congregation, and to introduce other witnesses, where it may be necessary to bring the process to issue, and when they can be procured to attend; to receive members into the church; to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend or exclude from the sacraments, those who are found to deserve censure; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation, and to appoint delegates to the higher judicatories of the Church."[2]

In asserting, then, that the ruling eldership is a spiritual office, designed to secure the good order and healthy life of the Church, no more is asserted than is claimed for it by our Book of Faith and Government and sanctioned by the word of God. It is wisely adapted to share with the pastor the responsibility of feeding the Church of God, and to aid him in devising and executing plans for advancing its interests. It is designed to relieve him from cares too numerous and onerous for him, so that he may give himself up

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[1] Chap. xiii. [2] Chap. ix.

more specifically and entirely to the preaching of th gospel in the pulpit and from house to house. The elders are the minister's counsellors and coadjutors, while at the same time the representatives and friends of the congregation; coming one degree nearer the people than does the minister, being themselves a portion of the flock to whom he ministers. Happy is that pastor who has an efficient board of elders,—men who appreciate the nature of their office, and who endeavour to discharge its duties with a right spirit. Aarons and Hurs are they indeed to him, holding up his hands, cheering his heart, seconding his efforts, and doing much to give them success. One wrong-minded, obstinate, or ill-spirited elder may indeed be a thorn in a minister's side. Such occasionally are to be found; men who seek to lord it over God's heritage; to *rule* indeed in the Church of God; to rule pastor as well as people, and their brother-elders also, —all but themselves; not aware, in their ambition, or vanity, or unconscious love of mischief, that there is an evil spirit within them, that domineers over all that is good in them, and drives them to do wrong. Such elders there are, unhappily. Poor human nature will not throw off infirmity, until the earthly is exchanged for the heavenly life. And we must not forget that the very mischief which one troublesome elder may cause, is just an evidence of the importance of the office, and of the great value to a pastor of a judicious, earnest, spiritual session. Promptness, energy, judiciousness, impartiality,—these are more likely to be secured by such a representative body. Busybodies, restless men, men who love the pre-eminence, are also found among the people; and a sound session is a great help to a pastor, in controlling

them, and securing the peace and good order of a congregation.

And happy is that church that is favoured with a wise and pious eldership; an eldership alive to their duties, and anxious to perform them; taking the oversight of Christ's flock with a willing mind, and at the same time with a solemn sense of responsibility to God. How much may they do to secure the prosperity of the church! counselling church-members and inquiring penitents; visiting the families, and promoting peace and friendliness of feeling; conducting social meetings; sustaining Sabbath-schools. How much have the elders of the churches done in these respects during seasons of religious awakening! and in seasons of comparative deadness, how much have godly, devoted elders done to keep alive the flame of piety and the church's activity!

We do magnify the office. It is not a mere sinecure. It is not a mere form. It is not at all a secular appointment. It is of high significance in its bearing on the life of the Church. It has wrought much for Christ's cause in the past. The history of our Church will tell how the elders have stood side by side with the ministers, in battling for Christ and his cause, or how they have championed the cause of the people, when a worldly or arrogant priesthood seemed to seek predominance; and how they have maintained in our lower and higher courts the principles of freedom, the right of conscience, and the authority of the word of God. It may be made still more effective as a spiritual power, by a thorough use of its functions. And we shall contribute to this, if we exalt it to its due place in the regard of the Church, and if elders themselves will realize the responsibility that rests on

them, as well as the honour that God and his Church have conferred upon them.

We do magnify your office, brethren of the eldership. And we would have you magnify it; not in the spirit of boasting or self-sufficiency. Paul had no such feeling when he magnified his office as apostle to the Gentiles, and thanked God for the honour conferred on him. But we would have you understand to what an office you have been called, that you may appreciate both your privileges and responsibilities. Your appointment is of God; but you are not exalted above your fellow-Christians, to exercise lordship over them. You are rulers in the church; but you rule by serving. You are responsible to God; you are also responsible to the church. Your solemn ordination gives you the oversight of the flock; but you are amenable to your brethren. You are associated with the pastors in the government of the church; but you are not set to be their governors and teachers. You are called to a spiritual work, to a care for souls. In your official capacity, the secular cares of the church do not belong to you. Yours is the spiritual welfare of the flock of Christ.

Now, what a demand is here made on your time, your thoughts, your hearts! What a work,—a blessed, precious work,—a work that has joy in it now and shall have a large reward of faithfulness hereafter,—what a work has God given you! What solemn responsibilities has he laid on you! May you so understand it, and the Church so understand it, and ministers so understand it, that so the ruling eldership may have due honour, and the prayers of the people; that it may not be an object of unholy ambition, or restless love of prominence; that its entrance may be

guarded with solemn responsibilities, and its work may be well done.

From this view of the nature and design of the office, we pass now to consider

THE DUTIES WHICH IT INVOLVES.

Unavoidably some references to these have already been made. In general, the duty of the eldership is *to have an oversight of the church;* to see that it is supplied with the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments; to guard its spiritual character, keeping a watchful eye upon it; promptly, and with a heart of kindness, to admonish those who are going astray, and firmly, but with equal kindness, to exercise the discipline of the church in the case of offenders.

This in general. Now to specify some particulars. The elders have relations to the church and congregation to which they specially belong; and relations to the Church at large.

I. The elders, together with the pastor of each church, constitute *the session* of the church, whose duties have already been recited. The chief of these are three.

(1.) *Receiving members into the church.*

It becomes their duty, in connection with the pastor to examine those who present themselves as candidates for church-membership; to ascertain the ground of their religious hope, their evidence of Christian character, and measure of religious knowledge, and to decide the question of their admittance to the communion of the church. A solemn and responsible work, to be conducted with great care, kindness, sympathy, discrimination. It is no light matter to hold thus the keys of Christ's earthly kingdom

The purity and activity of the church depend much on the right use of this trust. The interests of immortal souls may be affected by it.

(2.) *The exercise of church-discipline devolves on the session.*

This also is a matter of great delicacy and importance, deeply concerning the church, and demanding the exercise of prudence and sympathy. It is a duty always trying to the sensibilities; yet it must not be neglected. Faithfulness here may be as essential to the prosperity of the church as prayer or preaching, or care in admitting members. It is a happy thing when, by watchfulness, private admonition, judiciousness, and gentleness, the necessity for judicial action can be avoided. But when this cannot be, judicial discipline is a solemn duty that must be carefully performed. In the performance of this duty, the elders have a directory in our Book of Discipline, to which it becomes them closely to adhere.

(3.) *The session are to concert measures for promoting the spiritual welfare of the church.*

The elders are to give the pastor the benefit of their counsel and co-operation in all that belongs to the spiritual interest of their charge, both, with mutual confidence, being animated with a desire for the healthful progress of the church, and asking from time to time what may be done to secure this.

In addition,—

(*a.*) The elders are charged with the supply of the pulpit, and with the care of the social and religious meetings of the congregation. When no special arrangement of a different kind is made, in case of the pulpit being vacant, or the pastor being absent, it would devolve on them to secure suitable ministerial services, and, as circumstances might indicate, to sug-

gest to the congregation such a person as they might think suitable for the vacant charge; while the people naturally look to them to conduct the prayer and conference meetings, as these occur.

(*b.*) According to the custom of our churches, (with some exceptions,) it belongs to the elders to distribute the elements in the administration of the Lord's Supper.

(*c.*) They should feel themselves called upon to co-operate with the pastor in the oversight of the youth of the congregation. They are to take heed "to *all* the flock." This involves (1) The encouragement and securing, as far as practicable, of *parental discipline;* enjoining on church-members the bringing of their children to baptism; the observance of family worship, and religious instruction at home; doing what they can to have all these practically regarded. It involves (2) The support of *Sabbath-schools,* the giving to them their countenance and aid; and in general the religious instruction of the young, especially of the baptized children of the church. (3) It involves a regard for *the education of young men for the ministry.* This is a province in which the elders of our churches have weightier responsibilities than many of them have yet discerned, and in which they may do a noble work for the ministry and the Church at large, while developing the piety and strength of their own congregations. With an earnest, intelligent interest in this matter, imbued with the spirit of the Master in his words, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest," (Matt. ix. 37, 38,) they may keep this subject before the mind and heart of the Church, and enlist her large interest and prayers and contribu-

tions in its behalf. They may thus call out into the ministry larger numbers of young men, and secure for our institutions of learning the support they need.

Another duty devolving on the elders is—

(*d.*) *Family visiting.* This, while commended to us by its intrinsic excellence, is implied by the very fact of the general oversight committed to them. That they may faithfully execute their office, it is essential that they should be acquainted with the members of the church, and it cannot be doubted—for experience proves it—that great benefit to the spiritual condition of the church arises from a judicious system of visiting properly executed by the elders. They are not inquisitors; but they are brethren, sustaining along with their fraternal an official relation, and "they have power to inquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members of the church." There is probably not a family in any church or congregation, that would not welcome a visit from its elders. Certainly it is the general sentiment that such visits should be made, not as mere formalities, but as friendly religious calls, in which kindliness of feeling shall prevail and the religious well-being of the family shall be sought. It would be a blessed thing if there were more of this friendly religious intercourse among the members of the Church. The Church is too far from realizing the benefits that would flow from proper Christian intercourse and religious conversation. She has not yet entered into the enjoyment of Mal. iii. 16, 17:—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;

and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." But the official relations of the elders render this peculiarly incumbent on them. The right discharge of this duty will do much to secure the harmony and friendly feeling of the church, the attachment of members to each other and to their office-bearers, and to promote the comfort and the piety of God's saints, and to bring many into his Church. The loving fidelity and zeal of the elders in many of our churches have been greatly owned and blessed by God in the conversion of many souls, and in the reviving of many Christians.

(*e.*) The elders are also *to be examples to the flock*, manifesting in their own lives, and in their families, such a spirit and behaviour as they inculcate on others. And this assumes the more significance from the fact that, as laymen, not solely given up to the work of the ministry and sustained by a regular support from the church, elders are engaged in the secular business of life. Hence they are brought more constantly among men, into the world, and have opportunities of manifesting a Christian character, of carrying the influences of religion, where the pastor seldom goes. A wide field of usefulness is thus opened to them, while a large responsibility rests on them, calling for much watchfulness and prayer.

II. *The elders have relations to the Church at large.* It is their duty, as they may be appointed, to represent their own church and congregation in the Presbytery and the Synod, and their Presbytery in the General Assembly. It becomes them to be punctual and prompt in their attendance, and to give their attention and their counsel, as occasion may demand, in all the deliberations of these bodies. Here some of their most solemn and responsible duties are per-

formed. The examining of candidates for the ministry, and approving them as suitable for ordination; the investigation and decision of judicial cases, affecting the rights of individuals or bodies, or interpreting fundamental principles of church-government; and the adopting and recommending of plans of action, for the promotion of the interests of the Church, the spread of Christ's kingdom, involving sometimes principles of highest importance; in such matters as these, the elders are called to act for the good of the Church and the glory of God. And it is highly desirable that the brethren of the eldership should in larger numbers join with the brethren of the ministry in our ecclesiastical judicatories and in their deliberations. Their punctual presence and active participation in these might add greatly to the efficiency of the Church, while enlarging their own views on the importance of their office and deepening their interest in it.

Such is a mere glance at some of the duties of the eldership. Truly it is no sinecure, but a responsible and honourable position, affording large opportunities for usefulness. The elder may say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But he can look for help to God, and covet the reward of faithfulness. He will greatly need divine aid. He will greatly need to lead a life of prayer; to cultivate a familiarity with the Scriptures and an intelligent apprehension of their meaning, and an acquaintance with the condition of the Church and the progress of Christ's kingdom.

In order to complete our view of the subject, we ought to glance yet at two points,—the *qualifications* for the eldership, and the *duties of the people* towards the elders.

THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE ELDERSHIP.

What Paul says to Timothy about *bishops*, and to Titus about *elders*, using the two terms as synonymous, is certainly applicable to ruling as well as to teaching elders:—"A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."[1]

To mention more particularly a few of the prominent qualifications, there is—

1. *Sound piety.* On this point there need be scarcely a remark. An elder ought to be a man of unquestioned and earnest piety; a member in full standing in the church which he is called to serve as an elder, and one whose life commends his piety to the regard of his brethren.

2. He should be a man of *some Christian experience;* "not a novice;" not one recently converted, knowing comparatively little of his own heart and of the struggles of the Christian life, and so unfitted to sympathize with his brethren and counsel them, and to examine those applying for admittance to the church, or to sit in judgment on those charged with delinquency. Our book presents us no limit as to age, or length of Christian profession,—the word *elder* being merely an official title, having no reference to length of days.[2] Each case must be judged by its own merits,

[1] Titus i. 7–9; 1 Tim. 3.

[2] It is interesting to observe how this title has found a place in the principal languages. Obviously its origin is in the fact that the older men originally bore rule, as commanding respect and reverence for

for individuals will differ widely in qualifications: the Christian of recent connection with the Church may have a deeper experience than some of older standing. But the apostolic rule is, "Not a novice,"[1] and, "Lay hands suddenly on no man."[2]

3. *He should be sound in the faith.*

His should be an intelligent piety, so that he may be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him, to maintain his position, and to defend the truth against gainsayers. He should also be qualified to instruct others. Knowing what are the doctrines of the gospel, as held by his denomination, and holding them sincerely, he should be able to contend for them earnestly. Our ordination-service requires of the elder to affirm that he does "sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." Only thus will he be qualified to counsel others as to the views of the Church, or to perform his appropriate part in the session when persons apply for admission to the communion of the Church, or in the higher judicatories.

4. *He should be a man of prudence.*

Prudence is of more importance than learning in conducting the affairs intrusted to the eldership,

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their age and wisdom and paternal authority. But it soon passed from this primitive signification into a simple name of office. Besides our word *elder*, which is of Saxon origin, we have transferred into our language the Greek words "Presbyter" (of which Elder is the translation) and "Presbytery," denoting a body of ministers or elders; and from the Latin word of the same signification we have "Senator" and "Senate." Of a similar origin are the French "Seigneur," and the "Grand Seignior" of Turkey, and the Spanish "Señor," and some others. Out of all these, as well as of our Saxon term "alderman" or elderman, the original idea of age is lost; and they are simply names of office, or titles of address.

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 6. [2] 1 Tim. v. 22.

though, of course, learning along with prudence increases the elder's efficiency, and it is ever desirable to have in our boards of elders men of intelligence and enlarged views. But it is essential, in view of the importance, delicacy, and intricacy of the matters often involved in the work of the session, that all the elders should be prudent men, acting wisely.

5. *He should be a man of good reputation.*

"He must have a good report of them which are without."[1] If he bring with him into the eldership a bad reputation among his brethren or among the world, how can he hope to exert a good influence over them, or to preserve unimpaired the purity and integrity of the Church? If he does not command respect, he will not add to the strength of his pastor and associate elders, or help forward the cause of the Church.

The importance of a due regard to these qualifications in the choice of elders is the more strikingly apparent from the fact that *their office is permanent.* They are ordained for life, as ministers are. "The offices of Ruling Elder and Deacon," our Book says, "are both perpetual, and cannot be laid aside at pleasure. No person can be divested of either office but by deposition."[2] Cases may occur in which the elder may cease to be an acting elder; and for these our Book makes provision; and in all such cases the people who elect the elder have voice and authority.[3] An elder removing from the church in which he was elected to that office does not carry with him the authority to act as an elder in the church to which he goes. They may choose him, already an elder, to be their elder; otherwise, he remains simply without the exercise of the functions of the eldership. Still, the

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 7. [2] Form of Govt., chap. xiii. sec. vi. [3] Ib. sec. vi. and vii.

office is perpetual. This is the theory of the Church, and, so far as we can discover, of the New Testament. It may be competent for individual congregations to secure, if practicable, rotation in the discharge of this office, so as to call into service a larger number of members; but clearly the theory of our Book seems to be that elders are ordained for life. Permanency is a prominent feature of the office, one of its excellencies, and, at the same time, a feature that adds to the carefulness with which it should be regarded, and the seriousness that surrounds it.

THE DUTIES OF THE PEOPLE.

Ruling elders are chosen by the members of the church from among their own number, and set apart for the work to which their office calls them. They are thus the voluntarily-appointed representatives of the Church, charged with the care of her highest interests. They are a ministry of God in the Church's service. As such, they should receive respect and honour. They are "powers" and "authorities," to whom there should be a due subjection, as free men in the Lord submit to his laws. Paul says, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour." Again: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." And again: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." And again: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account."[1]

[1] 1 Tim. v. 17; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 7 and 17.

So, brethren, members of the Church, should you ever regard those who, by your own free choice, are set apart to the eldership among you. They are set for the government of the Church. You have called them to this. It is presumed they are called also by the Holy Ghost. Regard them as invested with a solemn office, having intimate relations to the best interests of the Church. As such, give them your affectionate respect and support. Yield readily to their arrangements for the conducting of public worship and the promotion of religion among you. Give them your earnest co-operation. Make them welcome to your homes, and open to them your hearts, and ask them for their prayers. Let them be encouraged by your welcome and sympathy, and aided to overcome embarrassment and timidity in their attempts to serve the Lord. Be not disposed to find fault with them, hastily to censure them, hastily to believe an evil report against them and to give it currency. Above all, remember that their office is one of great responsibility, requiring them to devote to it much time and energy, and needing much grace to enable them faithfully to do their duty; and, therefore, often *pray for them.* Do not forget this. They need your prayers. Praying for them, you will be more interested in them, and, through the grace of God imparted to them in answer to your prayers, they will be able the more faithfully to labour in your behalf and for the Church at large, and thereby for the glory of God.

The ruling eldership is a spiritual office, designed to secure the good order and the healthy life of the Church.

Ruling elders are the representatives of the people,

chosen from among them, and solemnly ordained by the presiding minister or pastor, to administer the religious affairs of the church and congregation.

They are the co-labourers of the pastor in the government of the Church. The pastor's specific and sole work, to which he gives himself wholly, is the preaching of the gospel and the care of souls. Each pastor is head of his charge or parish, the presiding officer of the session. The elders are laymen, assisting him in his work, but not taking his place.

They have authority among the people, but only so far as the Constitution of the Church specifies. As the representatives of the people, they act in their name and in their behalf.

They have a weighty charge, demanding prudence, piety, the spirit of wisdom and love.

They have an honourable office, in which they may do very much for the good of souls and the glory of God.

They should have the respect, the confidence, and the co-operation of the people.

A ruling eldership profoundly impressed with a sense of its duty, and filled with wisdom from on high, is a mighty power for good in the Church of Christ, designed to sustain, strengthen, and assist the ministry in feeding the flock of Christ.

May such be the Eldership in all our churches! May the great Head of the Church write, on the hearts of all the office-bearers of the Church, the words of his Apostle Paul:—"*Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*"

THE RELATION

OF

BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH.

THE object of this tract is not to discuss the divine authority nor the proper subjects of Infant Baptism. We assume that those who profess religion have a right to present for baptism not only their offspring, but any children whom they may have adopted, or for whose spiritual training they are responsible. On the presumption that children have been properly baptized, our only aim is to consider the relation and duties necessarily implied in the position thereby attained.

We are convinced that there is a gross inconsistency between the theory and the present practice of the Church on this subject,—that many evident and growing evils may be directly traced to this inconsistency,—and that, in the language of the practical and earnest Baxter, "nineteen out of twenty of our children, consecrated to God in their infancy, would grow up dutiful, orderly, and serious, and before they reached mature age would recognise their membership by a personal act, with sincerity and to edification, if the divine plan with respect to this matter were faithfully carried out." We have no new, but only a neglected, doctrine to present; nor do we believe that any improvement can be suggested in the system originally instituted by God, always found successful in the best ages of the Church for nearly four thousand years, and capable of adaptation to every form of

progressive civilization. We take up the subject with a conviction of its high importance; and we invite our readers to consider it with more than ordinary seriousness and prayer.

Let us consider, first, *the relation of baptized children to the Church*, and then *the treatment they should receive.*

RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH.

I. On the first of these points two opinions have been maintained, differing, as we believe, not so much in their logical results as in their practical tendencies. The one regards baptized children as members of the Church in the same complete sense in which others are who have themselves professed their faith in Christ, but with duties necessarily limited by the amount of their knowledge; the other regards them as members only in some inferior and peculiar sense. There is a vagueness in the relation implied by the latter opinion which goes far to discredit it. We think also that it receives no countenance from either the inspired or the uninspired standards of our Church. Nothing is said in these of more than one kind of church-members. No doubt, every thing which distinguishes one member of the Church from another may be a ground of classification and may give rise to various duties; but, if each disability under which a member labours were allowed to limit his essential membership, we should have endless diversities and gradations in ecclesiastical rank. The Scriptures speak of diversities in gifts and graces, but of only one form of connection with the visible body of Christ. Under both the ancient and the Christian dispensation the children were pronounced "holy" in the same external ecclesiastical sense with the whole congregation (Exod. xix. 6; 1 Cor. vii. 13.) In consistency

with this, the articles of our faith and discipline never allude to any partial or modified membership. They declare that "the catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof;" that "the visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, consists of all those persons throughout the world who profess the true religion, *together with their children*, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God;" that "a particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, *with their offspring*, voluntarily associated together for divine worship," &c.; and that "all baptized persons are members of the Church, and when they have arrived at the years of discretion they are bound to perform all the duties of church-members." Confession of Faith, chap. xxv. 1, 2; Govt. b. i. ch. ii. 2, 4; b. ii. 1, 6; Larger Cat. Quest. 165.

So, if we recur to the nature of the sacrament they have received in common with those who have professed their faith, we shall find no distinction in its meaning. Baptism has always the same signification, whether applied to an infant on the faith of his parent or to an adult on his own. It is in all cases "a seal of the righteousness of faith," but not necessarily the faith of the recipient. It is a ratification of a covenant with the whole body of believers, of which he may or may not form a part. The faith of the person making the offering is of course always implied in the act of presentation; but he may be either the subject himself, or his parent. In every case, however, the person baptized is consecrated to the Lord. By instituting such an ordinance, God seals his covenant

with all his people; by each valid administration of it, his seal is in fact applied to a particular subject, who is thereby incorporated into the visible family of God; and by the peculiar form of the sacrament, the necessity and reality of the cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood and of the Holy Spirit's influences are both signified and confirmed. The signification of the rite is always the same, whether the subject of it be in the personal exercise of faith or is a passive recipient of the covenant blessing. Under the ancient dispensation, baptism was applied even to inanimate objects,—as the vessels of the sanctuary. This signified that such things were to be employed exclusively in sacred services. In the Christian Church, it has been elevated into a sacrament, primarily to signify the consecration of its subject to the Lord; but by its general administration and its symbolical form it becomes a sign and seal of great truths and promises addressed to the whole body of believers. Wherever it is properly administered and understood, God signifies and seals his covenant, and the offerer, in common with the whole body of the Church, presents the offering and receives the covenanted blessings. Direct. ch. viii. 4.

But that our Church intends to make no distinction in her membership is still more evident from the fact that no provision is made for the subsequent admission of any who have been baptized in infancy. "Unbaptized persons" are spoken of as "applying for admission to the Church," and, after making a public profession of their faith, they are to be received by baptism; but "children born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to God in baptism," are only to be "*admitted to sealing ordinances;*" "they are to be examined as to their knowledge and piety," and, if the examination is satisfactory, "they are to be in-

formed that it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper." Though this "admission to sealing ordinances" is often spoken of as an admission to the Church, such language is not only incorrect, but injurious, for it produces a wrong impression as to the position and duties of those who are already in the Church but who have not assumed, or are neglecting, their privileges. The only door of admission to the visible Church which the New Testament or our Directory for Worship recognises, is baptism. The children of believers are indeed recognised in the latter as "*born* within the pale of the Church," as "federally holy, and therefore as *under obligation* to be baptized," (chap. ix. 1; vii. 4;) and hence the definitions of the Church in its various forms are all so framed as to include them. By this, however, we understand not that baptism is unnecessary for their admission, since, in two other places, baptism is defined to be a sacrament "whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church," (Conf. chap. xxviii. 1; L. Cat. Quest. 165,) but only that they were born within the pale of ecclesiastical privileges and were therefore entitled to an admission by baptism. Their position is precisely like that of the children of the ancient Church, who by birth were entitled to the seal of the covenant, and who were to be "*cut off* from their people" when they willingly remained uncircumcised. Gen. xvii. 14.

It has been objected to this view that it makes one a member of the Church, and bound to perform all the duties of such a member, with no act of his own consenting to the arrangement. Such an objection is valid only on the presumption that the Church is merely a voluntary society, dependent upon the free adherence of its members. But in this respect the Church is no more a voluntary society than the family

or the state. When persons arrive at years of discretion, they are at liberty to remain in connection with the family or state within which they were born, or to connect themselves with another; but until by their own act they *separate* themselves from their natural home, they are regarded as its inmates and are compelled to comply with their obligations as such. The duty of obedience to God is one which springs from our natural relations to him; and God has the right to place us, by our birth and by his positive institutions, where we may be constrained to a compliance with it by every possible motive. So long as we are ignorant and immature, it is right that we should be thrown into relations in which we may best learn and appreciate our obligations; but when these ends have been accomplished, we may be left free to forsake, if we will, our privileges. God bestows the privilege of a membership in his Church without asking the consent of the beneficiary. He makes that privilege dependent at first upon a natural relation in which he finds an appropriate channel for the bestowal of his blessings. But when an intelligent choice is possible, he proposes these blessings only to the acceptance of faith.

II. *But let us now consider the* TREATMENT SUCH INFANT MEMBERS SHOULD RECEIVE *from the Church.* To be a member of a church does not necessarily imply a right to all its privileges. As in the civil community all are not entitled to the elective franchise nor eligible to all offices,—and as in the family "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father,"—so the privileges of our spiritual "Jerusalem, who is the mother of us all," are wisely bestowed, according to the various capacities and dispositions of her

children. Though all are "children of the promise, as Isaac was," some are ignorant, and need instruction; some are wilful, and need restraint; and some are obstinate, and need a severe discipline.

1. They are all to be regarded as members of the particular church in which they were baptized, until they become connected with another, or are separated from it. This is said in opposition to the opinion, entertained by some, that they are members only of the general, but not of any local or particular, church. As well might we speak of a branch as connected with a tree and yet with no particular part of the tree.

2. Such a membership is always to be looked upon and treated as subordinate to that of the family. Where only those present their children in baptism who have the exclusive control and education of them, there will seldom be any conflict between the domestic and the ecclesiastical authority. But cases may arise in which those who constitute the head of the family may be divided in opinion or may essentially change their own relations to the Church; or, as in some papal countries, baptism may be clandestinely administered to the children of such as pay no allegiance to the Church. In such cases the authority of the Church should always yield to that of the parent. The family constitution is prior to all other social relations. No power on earth has the right to step in between a parent, in the lawful exercise of his authority, and his child. That a parent may forfeit his right by incapacity, by gross neglect, or by cruelty, when the Church or the state may lawfully interfere,—and that he may be properly admonished and disciplined for failure in his parental duties, is admitted; yet would it be a fearful wrong to transfer the control of children from the domestic to the ecclesiastical authorities. There

are securities provided by the Creator, in the instincts of the parental heart, for the tender and faithful training of the young, which may not indeed always be effectual, but are the best possible in the case.

3. But there are many privileges of the Church the proper enjoyment of which is for a time impossible to baptized children. For mere membership it is requisite only that they should be human beings in the natural channel through which the blessings of the divine covenant flow; but they cannot participate in *all those blessings at once.* Eternity may be necessary for the full realization of these. They have been brought into "the commonwealth of Israel;" but the blessings of "the covenant of promise" can be theirs only as they have power to reach and apprehend them. Such spiritual privileges can be enjoyed only with a knowledge of the gospel and by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To a profitable participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, especially, it is indispensable that the recipients should understand the truths signified and sealed in it; and particularly must they discern the Lord's body. It was therefore a gross superstition, and a total misconception of our Saviour's language as to the necessity of "eating his flesh," (John vi. 53–56,) which led certain African churches, in the second and third centuries, for a brief period, to allow of infant communion. A spiritual blessing must be received by faith. It cannot be communicated in a carnal manner. Even when any have acquired sufficient knowledge, but have not improved it so as to exercise faith in Christ, they are incapable of a proper reception of this sacrament. At an earlier period they had been kept back from the table of the Lord for want of knowledge, without fault or guilt of their own; but now that they know him

and reject him, they are kept back on account of their sin. Of course, in the latter case the act of the Church in debarring them from communion is a continual censure of their unbelief and impenitence. They are not thereby deprived of their membership, however long they may neglect their duty; but they are members against whom the Church perpetually utters her protest and admonition as often as she refuses them a place at her communion. They are still members, and must remain such as long as they are not cut off, by a formal act, from the congregation of the Lord; but they are irregular, disobedient, and under the solemn disapprobation of those that are over them in the Lord. They have been guilty of no small crime against the Lord and against his people. They have been trained up in the bosom of the Church, in the enjoyment of its instruction and ordinances, without a suitable improvement of their privileges, and are wilful rejecters of the mercy and the benefits of redemption. For such a sin, they ought to feel the whole power of a severe rebuke every time the Church refuses to invite them to her Lord's table.

4. In the mean time, what are the duties which the Church owes to this portion of her members? They may be divided into two general classes, corresponding to the state of the members themselves.

(1.) The *first* of these relates to infant members who have not sufficient knowledge for a suitable participation in the Lord's Supper. These children are a sacred trust which the Church receives from her Lord. They are the principal hope she has for the continuance of a Christian community in the world. Deprive her of this hope, and the prospect of maintaining her numbers by conversions from an impenitent and heathen world would be small. And yet

each of these children must be begotten by God unto a living faith in Christ, or remain in the ranks of spiritual death. Each of them has entered upon life by nature a child of wrath even as others, with a mind perverted by fleshly tendencies and sure to put forth a sinful character in actual practice, but by grace a child of the covenant and an heir to saving influences which may counteract these fatal tendencies. As the only means to this end within human power, their minds must be thoroughly imbued with divine truth. By faithfully instructing and training them, with constant prayer for the divine blessing, we may expect them to be kept from a gross departure from God and from a complete development into unholy dispositions. We should not expect them to enter into the ungodly world, to grow fixed in sin, and then to reclaim them by a single conflict with their mature passions,—as seems to be the policy of some,—but, by the gentle cords of Christian nurture and discipline, to retain them within the fold of Christ, and keep them from the first, if possible, in subjection to the truth.

It is not intended that this work should be taken from the hands of the parents, but that the Church and the parents should co-operate by the combination of their respective powers. *In the earliest periods of childhood* they must be intrusted almost exclusively to the care of the parents. Though they have been publicly made members of the Church, and are subject to its supervision and care, the power of the Church is limited by its peculiar nature and objects. As the natural educators of their offspring, parents must be responsible for the earliest and most important impressions they receive. At first in the mother's arms, and afterwards in the family circle, a direction must be given to the thoughts and affections which nothing

afterwards will be likely wholly to change. Yet at this early point the Church can awaken or increase the parents' sense of obligation, by demanding from them at the baptismal altar a solemn pledge that they will train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Nor should the Church be satisfied with a mere pledge. It should be seen to that these promises are fulfilled; and parents should be stimulated to fidelity by the counsels and aid of the Church. If the children of Christians are growing up ignorant, wilful, and irreligious, the Church should admonish the parents for their neglect and solemnly remind them of their obligations.

In early youth, also, the Church should by no means be unmindful of those teachers to whom the moral and literary education of her children is intrusted. The primitive Church, and our fathers in more recent times, were especially attentive to this matter. Congregational, academic, and collegiate schools were provided, whose teachers were placed under the special supervision of the officers of the Church. The religious character of the youth was made the object of most anxious care; the choice of their future profession was assisted, and, where any were found qualified for the holy ministry or other offices of sacred trust, the outward call of the Church was used to awaken in them a consciousness of their divine vocation. Nor should we regard ourselves as any less responsible for a similar attention in an age and country in which the state has taken the work of education so extensively under its patronage. Not merely have religious parents and churches power to establish schools and institutions of learning under their exclusive control, but they should have much to do in seeing that the teachers of our common and higher

schools are suitably qualified for their positions and attentive to their duties. There are few locations where a mild resistance to the appointment of improper instructors would be disregarded. Much might be accomplished by an habitual inquiry, from the right quarter, into the moral condition of all public schools.

But, above all, the Church is bound to provide for the religious education of her children, by catechetical instruction, by Sabbath-schools, and by family visitation. On this point there has been for some time a culpable neglect in many of our churches. Sabbath-schools have indeed been commonly maintained, especially in cities and towns; but frequently the doctrines and usages of our own Church are studiously excluded from the reading and instructions there afforded, while many families in the country have no access even to them. Parents and ministers also become inattentive to this matter, and the consequence is that the children are totally uninstructed in the faith of their fathers. Such a course is surely unworthy of intelligent Christians who have conscientiously embraced the views of truth which they profess to hold. If we believe that our doctrines and polity are worthy of our own adherence and of a special organization,—if we deprecate the evils of family disunion, and desire that our children should unite with us in the same faith and worship,—we should strive to impart to them the principles on which our system is founded. Our fathers were willing even to die for the maintenance of their peculiar principles. Our indifference, we have reason to fear, is not an intelligent liberality, but an ignorant or a thoughtless neglect and a feeble compromise with external influences. In our Sabbath-schools an attractive lustre should be thrown around

principles which are everywhere else so much spoken against, and the minds of the children should there be drawn into practical sympathy and co-operation with all the benevolent movements of our Church. There the whole heart of the Church should be felt, and should send its pulsations into the bosom of the youngest member. The excellent Shorter Catechism should at least be taught as soon as possible to all, and every great movement of the Church should be made known and be brought to bear upon each child. In some appropriate way, the officers of the church should see that this is done, and should so control the school that it shall become an efficient seminary of the Church. If some families reside at too great a distance to attend upon it, other means should be devised for reaching them. Parents, teachers, and the pastor, with the elders, should require recitations, in which the proficiency and religious attainments of all should be made a subject of careful inquiry.

A place, also, should be provided in the house of God, not only for each member of the congregation, but for each member of his family capable of being present; and books should be procured, that all may participate in each part of public worship. They should all be so seated that the parent may not only check irreverence, but aid in such suggestions as may be needful to the inexperienced. And, finally, when they have returned to their respective homes, those who are able to do so should be called upon to render an intelligent account of what has been brought to their consideration during the day. How beautiful and how powerful would be such a Sabbath!

In addition to these means, every church should have, at least annually, a systematic course of parochial visitation. We see no reason why this long-established

and even primitive custom should be regarded as inapplicable to any state of society. No family should tolerate a false delicacy inconsistent with the Christian simplicity which it supposes. It affords an opportunity for faithful inquiries and admonitions, which would be regarded as intrusive and impertinent in ordinary ministerial intercourse, but for want of which many families long continue in spiritual disorder. During such a visitation, when the pastor is countenanced and aided by the presence of one or more of his elders, the whole household, if possible, and especially the children, should be affectionately counselled with and prayed for respecting their spiritual interests. Nothing gives such power to public preaching and to the calls of conscience as a system of this kind, when pursued for a long time and in a paternal spirit. It is sad to think how extensively it has been discontinued.

(2.) The second class of duties which the Church owes to her baptized children refers to those who have been sufficiently instructed to take upon themselves the vows of a profession of their own faith. When any among them give evidence that they understand the gospel and their personal obligations,—when they appear conscientiously to perform all their known duties, and to have a sincere love for divine things and a permanent interest in the cause of God,—and when, in the words of our Directory, they are "free from scandal, appear sober and steady and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed that it is their duty and their privilege to come to the Lord's Supper." The age at which this should be done must vary with different individuals, and is therefore left to the prudence of the parents and the officers of the church. To demand

of those who have been under Christian influences from their birth as striking evidences of a sudden conversion as from others, would seem most unreasonable and unscriptural. That even *they* need a change of heart, in which "old things pass away and all things become new," is unquestionable; but certainly the outward signs of such a change may ordinarily be expected to develop themselves more tranquilly and gradually than in the case of those who have gone further into the world and sin. To demand the same process in each instance would seem like requiring an equal degree of wickedness and hardness of heart, to render indispensable a similar train of exercises in their recovery. But in drawing forth the confidence and in developing the religious character of the young an especial delicacy and tenderness are indispensable. The parent, at home, the teacher, in the Sabbath or daily school, or the pastor, in his friendly intercourse, should kindly elicit their views of truth and duty; their daily life should be carefully observed, and every indication of a growing and confirmed attachment to religion should be tested. If these are satisfactory, they should never be left to grope their way to a full consciousness of their state, but they should be affectionately instructed, gradually enlisted in Christian activities and brought into the full communion of the Church. For want of a seasonable and wise attention to such cases, many of the most valuable and conscientious of our youth have been left under estrangement and perplexity, who otherwise would have been happy and efficient servants of their Lord.

But, under the most perfect performance of her duties, and certainly under the imperfect fulfilment of them ordinarily attained, the Church has no reason to expect that all her children will comply with their

obligations. Some will "break their bonds asunder and cast their cords away" from them. The children of the covenant not unfrequently renounce the privileges of their birthright, forsake their heavenly Father's house, and waste their "substance in riotous living." The inquiry then arises, What are the duties which she owes to such? Ought she to let them depart without restraint or any exercise of maternal authority? With the key of knowledge she has opened to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; and now, when they refuse to enter in, ought she not to treat them as earthly parents are expected to treat their undutiful offspring? If one has become a member of the Church by his own choice, most of us acknowledge that he is subject to inspection and discipline; and what valid reason can be assigned for withholding the same benefits from infant members? Will it be said that we have no right to obtrude our authority when it has never been recognised and accepted? Does the parent reason thus in his family when his children prove disobedient? Would the state withhold its arm of power were transgressors to urge a similar plea? Is the jurisdiction of the Church over her adult members nullified when in after-life they backslide and deny her authority? None hesitate to answer all these questions in the negative; and, if the views we have advocated in this treatise, and which are presented in our standards, be correct, the relation of infant members to our Church would justify a similar claim of subjection. When they were allowed to become members of His visible Church, their merciful Redeemer needed not their consent, and the question they were called upon to answer in subsequent life was not whether they were the Lord's and subject to the laws of his house, but

whether they would rebel against these laws and renounce their allegiance. And surely no class of human beings present a stronger appeal to the people of God for the exercise of her affectionate restraint than these wayward children, who know not what they do.

If, then, as they advance in knowledge and in years, they remain insensible to all expostulation, neglect religion, indulge in guilty delays, embrace false opinions, and choose courses of worldliness and sin, they should by no means be cast off. They still belong to God; their obligations to him are inevitable and perpetual; and as long as they are "prisoners of hope" they should be made to feel that "the vows of the Lord are upon them." In ordinary circumstances, however, where no crime is alleged against them but prevailing worldliness and impenitency, their perpetual exclusion from the table of the Lord is a sufficient testimony against their sin. Though to *them* this may seem to impose no privation, it is to the world in general a significant censure of their unchristian conduct. It is the duty of the Church, however, to regard them as always subject to her control. Not even a long-continued neglect of her authority should induce her to cast them off. Their names should be retained, and they should be frequently admonished of their obligations and perseveringly and solemnly reproved for their sin. Such admonition and reproof should be administered, first, *by their parents*. In the performance of this duty, however, there should be manifested an obvious distinction between it and all ordinary parental reproof. They should be addressed in the name of the Lord and of his people, without passion, tenderly, prayerfully, and in the retirement of the family. The offence should

not be treated as if of a personal or secular nature, but only as against Christ and his Church. Occasionally such admonition may be addressed to them *by their public teachers*, especially when these possess a kind of ecclesiastical character by the appointment of the Church. But above all, and on occasions of unusual importance, it should be addressed to them through *the officers of the church*. In the course of parochial visitation, excellent opportunities will occur, in which the continued impenitency of the more advanced children should receive the most earnest expostulation and reproof. Not unfrequently, also, cases of unusual obstinacy and of a gross disregard of domestic authority will become apparent, when the ecclesiastical may properly be added to the parental voice. Under the ancient dispensation, we know that filial disobedience was visited with the highest penalties. (Deut. xxi. 18–21.) In the Church of Scotland, in the Reformed Churches of the Continent, and in Roman Catholic Churches, of former times, public censures and penalties were not uncommon. We are inclined to regard these as inexpedient under the present forms of society. We think that the discipline of baptized youth should generally be confined to the various forms of admonition we have now indicated. A public exclusion from the Church, or a private erasure of their names by an act of Session from the roll of members, may be lawful in cases of aggravated crime; and yet we regard such measures as of questionable expediency. Until life is extinct, we may reasonably hope for success in efforts for their recovery; and why should we sunder them from all connection with the people of God, when their offences can bring no reproach upon their communion?

Such, we think, is the view which the Scriptures and

our authorized Articles of Faith and Worship present of the relation of baptized children to the Church, and of the duties which the Church owes to them. If it is correct, then,

1. *The baptism of children is a very solemn and significant rite.* We confidently believe that in our own Church it is usually so regarded; but how seldom is it entered upon by parents with the faith and prayer which properly belong to it! Instead of the mirth and parade which *sometimes* attend it, surely earnest, wrestling prayer and most careful self-examination would better become us. Why should it be looked upon as less important than the baptism and the public profession of an adult? The consecration, the perpetual obligation, the relations it implies, and the duties it requires, are in each case the same. The only essential difference is in the fact that the conscious agent in the one transaction is the parent, instead of the subject of the rite. But so perfect is the parental union that such a substitution involves no essential modification of the idea. With what deep interest in both instances must superior beings contemplate so solemn a covenant!

2. *Evidently the recent practice of our churches needs a thorough reform with respect to the treatment of their infant members.* In many places, almost nothing is done by which the connection of such members is recognised. They are not publicly instructed, and they feel not the pressure of discipline any more than children who sustain no such relationship. Even in churches where the duties to such children are best performed, few indeed maintain the excellent catechetical and parochial usage of our fathers, or practically recognise the obligations set forth in our standards. The benefits of Sabbath-schools, in which the books and the instruc-

tion and the benevolent action are confined to a basis common to all Christian sects, are by no means so extensive as our children have a right to claim. If such schools are allowed to supersede the catechetical instructions and the family visitations formerly regarded in all parts of our Church as a necessary part of our peculiar system, their expediency may well be questioned. Whatever may be said of some other denominations, the principal means by which our religion must be perpetuated in communities and families where it has already been planted must be by the religious education of the young; and the type of Christianity we communicate will of course be congenial to such a people and such a policy.

3. *How solemn and responsible is the position of those who have been introduced in their infancy to all the privileges of the Church, but have never complied with their obligations!* We have seen that their consecration to God and their corresponding duties are none the less because they were unable to join in the baptismal solemnities. "All souls are mine," says God; and he has seen fit to impose a mark of his ownership and a seal of his covenant upon those children of his people to whom the blessings of his Church most naturally descend. The visible sign by which these have been signified before the world may easily and quickly have been effaced. The waters of baptism, we believe, have in themselves alone no spiritual efficacy. But to the eye of faith they have an instrumental and a symbolic meaning which can never be lost while existence continues. They never fail to speak to God; and finally, if the guilty subject remains impenitent, they will have a significancy which the very fires of perdition will not altogether obliterate.

No. 300.

PERMANENCY

IN THE

PASTORAL RELATION.

The word Pastor is one of the terms now, and of old, in use to designate the relation which the minister of Christ sustains to his church. In much of the earlier history of the Church, it was less employed than several others; but in our day it is perhaps more common than any, especially when applied to one who sustains a permanent relation to a particular church. It is nearly synonymous with Shepherd, and had its origin among a people widely engaged in the keeping of flocks. It means, literally, a *Feeder*, since the chief concern of the keeper of a flock is the provision of its food.

The language of a people is always expressive of their common occupation; and the phrases of their daily life are applied to whatever subjects come within the compass of their thoughts. Hence these words and phrases will often be carried far from their sources, and become the every-day language of a scheme of science, or morals, or religion, in no wise related to the simple and distant employment in which they had their origin. Their inner meaning, nevertheless, will more easily be discovered by a recurrence to the circumstances of their earlier history. As the people among whom the Church had its beginning were flock-keepers, the Church itself became a "flock," and

its spiritual leaders Shepherds or Pastors. "I am the good Shepherd," said the first great Pastor. More than a thousand years before this had the sweet singer of Israel, fresh from the flocks which whitened the hills of Judea, made use of a like expression:—

> "The Lord is my Shepherd:
> I shall not want.
> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
> He leadeth me beside the still waters."

It may be further noted that the business of the shepherd was not only to provide food for his flock, but to remain with it, and guard it from the beasts which would destroy its members, to protect those members from wandering away from the main body, to aid the sick or the weakly, and, in fine, to have the charge and oversight of all that related to its safety, its necessities, its thrift, and its profit to the master. He entered upon these duties for life. He knew each individual of his flock and could call each by its name. Its successive generations passed away in his care, till his own turn came to lay down his life and be buried in the soil where the survivors still fed. The Great Shepherd alluded to well-known facts, therefore, as well as to his own coming sacrifice, when HE said, "I lay down my life for the sheep."

From these preliminary remarks, it is apparent that the phrase "Pastoral Relation" expresses, as its proper idea, the connection of an individual minister with an individual church, or "flock," as its spiritual guide, feeder, and protector till death or the providence of God shall separate them; and this, as already remarked, is in accordance with our common use of the phrase.

Nevertheless, a more particular examination of the

Scripture authority on which the relation rests seems desirable. The Scriptures afford us full and specific directions in all that concerns the ministry so far as certain of its relations to the Church are in question. We are not left in doubt as to its design and use, its rights and authority, its required qualifications, nor as to what ordinary specific duties it shall perform. Its permanency as an institution in the Church is everywhere, either directly or indirectly, taught. But as to the question in hand,—the matter of permanency in the individual relation of pastor to church,—our specific authority grows dim. Indeed, no Bible-text directly asserts any thing concerning it. We are left to incidental directions, to inferences from certain facts which the Scriptures furnish us, and to such decisions formed in the light of general principles as the experience of the Church shall find necessary or superior.

We have, nevertheless, reasons for believing that a consistent and nearly uniform practice prevailed from the earliest times. It would seem likely, from the general silence of the Scriptures concerning the matter, as well as from some incidental hints, that some of the apostles themselves confined the greater part of their work to settled pastoral effort. Paul, Peter, and some others performed a great amount of missionary work, such as forbade a long residence in a particular place. But that they did not expect their successors, nor their fellow-labourers generally, to follow their example in this respect, seems evident. It is said in the Acts that "they ordained them elders in every church."* Paul, writing to Titus, says also that he left him in Crete that, among other things, he

* Acts xiv. 23.

might "ordain elders in every city as he had appointed him."* Now, if these "elders," as is not doubted, were, some of them at least, ministers of the word, there is no proof, nor even probability, that as a general thing they performed a missionary or itinerating work. There may, to-be-sure, be a doubt as to how far at first they assumed all the duties which properly belong to the pastoral office; but as to this point the history of a period but little later is sufficiently luminous.

Unquestionably, from the first, the business of these elders was to teach in the particular church where they were appointed. Peter leaves us in no doubt on this subject; for he writes to some of them on this wise:—"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof,"† using the pastoral phraseology already noticed.

During the period immediately succeeding that of the apostles, ecclesiastical history informs us that *each minister was ordained to some special charge.* And it was required of such that each *remain in the diocese over which he was ordained.* The exceptions to this rule were contrary to the decided sentiments of the Church, and are pointedly condemned by the ancient canons as well as by the early ecclesiastical writers. From that period to this, through all the branches of the Church, in all phases of its history, this, with but few exceptions, has been the common practice.

What, then, is the precise difficulty to be met? So far as apprehended, the case is this. In our day, from various causes, there has grown up a *custom*—for a system it cannot be called—of *hiring* the minister for a limited period,—six months, or a year, as the case

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* Titus i. 5. † 1 Peter i. 1, 2.

may be,—and then renewing or extending the bargain at the close of the term with the same or another. This practice, having been at first adopted in particular cases from necessity, is continued from custom, till it begins to find advocates as a permanent arrangement.

We have seen what the Scriptures and ecclesiastical history teach on this subject. Let us see what experience and reason have to say. But we will first understand the limits of our question.

It is not to be affirmed that every individual upon whom hands have been laid is of course to assume the pastoral relation. For God hath set, says the apostle, some in the Church: first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, helps, etc. Guided by this, we may assume that division of labour in the Church of Christ may have some regard to the state of the world and the necessities of the case. Our later Christianity has devised various schemes of benevolent effort, which call for agencies, missionary labour, teaching, editing, and the like, most or all of which are best performed by ministers. These are exceptions; and there may be others.

There are also cases where the work must be of necessity of a missionary character,—especially in fields where our religion is newly propagated; and such fields are, and are likely to be for a long time, numerous and extended. Yet the endeavour ought to be to terminate as soon as possible the unsettled state of things and to introduce permanency in its stead.

After throwing out all these, a permanent settlement of one pastor over one church, till death or the providence of God shall terminate the relation, is demanded for the following reasons:—

The spiritual influence and usefulness of the pastor demand it.

The spiritual influence of the pastor constitutes his power to do good. It is that by which he successfully warns the wicked from his wickedness, and by which he confirms and guides believers in the way of holiness. It is the result of many things,—such as his power in the pulpit, in his personal intercourse, and in the councils of the church. It is increased by many things not precisely definable, but which accumulate and strengthen from period to period as his faculties mature and his character ripens under the systematic study of his great profession and the practice of his ministerial labours. The man who can stamp himself upon others at once is an exception to common cases; and styles of character which constitute exceptions to the mass of men are not, as a rule, to be desired in the ministry. That profession demands men substantially like, in natural qualities, the body of those whom they are to influence. Now, a thing that is to be permanent needs time to mature the elements of permanency. The whole analogy of nature teaches this. The tree increases in size and strength and beauty by virtue of its permanent fixture in a certain soil. Its growth is thereupon not spent in repairing the damages of removal, but is added year by year to previous accumulation. The more of growth it has, the more power of production it possesses,—on the principle that to him that hath shall be given. The channels of spiritual influence, like those of the waters, become deeper and broader by the continued action of the currents within them.

The minister who lives and grows with one community gradually establishes himself in it. He becomes more widely known to its people. The aged

come to his acquaintance, and the children grow up to reverence him. He gradually becomes stronger against the foes of his person—if he has them—and of his religion. Men will not lightly believe aught to the injury of one whom they have long, well, and favourably known and whose truth is established in the community. The "words of gentleness and grace," from the lips of one known to a whole city or settlement to be above guile, fall on the ear even of the scoffer with an unction second only in its irresistibleness to that which attended the words of his Master. Your man of a day may be a good man and preach like Apollos, yet but a portion of his hearers will delay their criticisms of his person, or his manner, or his matter, to consider and apply what he says; and even of these a portion will suspend their judgment to examine the correspondence between his life and teachings. It is a law of this world that what is new shall be examined, while the old, though full of wonder, passes of course.

The best members even of a church may make continual transfer of their good wishes from one to another, but not of their love. Love is stronger than any, if not every, element in a pastor's spiritual influence; but it is often of slow growth. Yet till a pastor be loved by his people, though he may be *hired*, he is not *settled*. The true pastor is to his people more than another man. The seal of the Great Pastor is upon him, and he comes to them not merely as the preacher, but as the dispenser, in some sense, of the blessings which a dying Saviour purchased. He bears a reflection of the sacredness of his Master's person; and, if he becomes to them as another, it is by his or their fault, or by his or their omission.

The pastor's work contemplates not alone his public

ministrations upon the Sabbath, but a great amount of work with individuals. Each part of his work is in order to each other part. He needs the acquaintance of his people, in order to the adaptation of his public addresses to their needs; and his public addresses make necessary individual acquaintance, for the purpose of knowing and following up the effect of his labours on the Sabbath.

He ought, therefore, to know each person in his congregation, and to know them better than anybody else does. His acquaintance with them ought to embrace the main features of their whole moral history, so that he can avail himself of the best opportunities to do them good.

To become acquainted with all the persons in a congregation, old and young,—to know their experiences, their temperaments, the points of their moral strength and weakness,—is a work which requires time. And yet he who works without this knowledge works, to a great extent, in the dark.

Nor is this all. The uses of this knowledge are mutual. The effect of it on the individual parishioner is to tie him to the pastor as to a best friend, and to induce him to be ready to communicate with him in any case of need, as a spiritual adviser. All persons at times need such advice; some need it often: and who, of all others, so fit to be consulted as the pastor? It is only by a long-continued pastorate that these high ends can be attained.

Sobriety and staidness of Christian character in the Church demand permanency in the pastoral office.

Who can fail to see that a fickle pastorate will beget a fickle people? The multitude will not, ordinarily, be much wiser or more exemplary than their teachers. It cannot be denied that the religion of our

day is extensively fickle in character, unsymmetrical in development, and greatly wanting in weight and persistency. It reminds one of those Athenians who spent their time in nothing else but to see or hear some new thing. It demands novelty, and the appetite for it grows with what it feeds upon. Can a migratory pastorship ever remedy such an evil? It is impossible that such a ministry should produce other than a shallow Christianity, bubbling and brawling over the stones which line the broad bed of its channel, and drying up with every summer's heat and every winter's frost. It is impossible but that parasitic underbrush and hideous weeds should spring up all along the mud of its neglected corners, and multiply their encroachments till the sunlight is shut out, and foul miasms are bred to choke the lungs of healthful activity. A herd of ministers roaming loose over the land may seem to convert men, and in some cases may really do so; but much of their work will remind one of strolling reapers, who go about slashing down the grain, to be shelled and perish for want of the after-care of the patient husbandman. Are we, for instance, to think that such as lose their piety in crossing a wide lake or a wide prairie are converted men? If they are, something is obviously the matter with that conversion. If they are not, how have they been so deceived? In either case, can it be that there is not a responsibility resting on their supposed spiritual fathers?

A pastor's habits of study demand permanency of settlement.

There is a proverb to the effect that the product of nothing is nothing. It is as true in its application to the phenomena of the human mind as to any other. Study is the first work of the pastor. But how can

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the comer and goer find time to push his researches into the domains of sacred truth? He has neither time nor opportunity to get beyond the common places of his profession, and can never obey the Scripture which enjoins upon him the production of things from the treasury *new* as well as *old*. The permanent pastor not only has a chance to study, but he must study. Neither self-respect nor fidelity to his Master allows him contentment in one beaten round of travel. He saves, besides, a great amount of labour which the itinerant must of necessity undergo. In each new field the same repetition of preliminaries must be attended to, in the way of making acquaintances, exploring peculiar necessities, and studying peculiar temperaments. Those who are tied to this work and harassed with the cares of migration can scarcely reach the upper walks of the profession at all: they must spend their lives in doing a work which ought to be done once for all. Besides, none can know the difficulty of retaining the means of study in a series of transitions but those who have tried it. Even if the roving preacher finds it possible to obtain books, he can scarcely carry them with him as he goes. Their sale must help out his slender means of flight, and that always at a loss.

The moral disasters which result from a ministry for whom there is no study are, however, far greater than the pecuniary ones. Whence are the half-formed *isms* and the fiery extremes of the past twenty years, and whence do they get their nourishment, but from those to whom study does not impart symmetry of views and consistency of purpose? A partially-educated mind, full of busy thoughts, but with no solid and substantial aliment to sustain it, is a sure source of extravagant fancies and impracticable schemings.

Such men infect the churches, and the churches infect their successors, till a pure gospel finds few proclaimers and weary hearers.

Sound economy demands permanency.

In these days, when the whole earth has need of the gospel, and is open and opening to it at once, the Church has no money to throw away on the aimless roving of its ministers. After husbanding its resources, it will fall short of its object.

Waste attends removal. The proverb likens it, with justice, to a fire. In the decisions of political economy, frequent or long carriage of commodities is the surest drain on their value, and conduces less to the thrift of a people than any other branch of employ.

It is not, however, the Church alone which suffers. Poverty to the minister himself is a sore evil. In past years there has been an impression abroad that he is under vows which bind him to it, which forbid his owning any property, or even his living in comfort. He should, according to this notion, practise an ascetic mode of life in some sense akin to that so long crystallized in the papal Church. We find no scriptural injunction of this kind; but the testimony is that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and that he who preaches the gospel should live by the gospel. A wealthy, and of course secular, ministry is to be deprecated; but experience and common sense both teach that a symmetrical, sound-minded pastor is one who is pecuniarily above harassing cares, or, in general, the necessity of secular labours. He should not be tempted or driven to a breach of the Saviour's injunction, to "take no thought of the morrow," what he shall eat, nor to be of doubtful mind.

The mere money spent in removal does not by any means cover the waste of it. Almost every man in a

fixed condition in life accumulates about him some little property, or at least some home-comforts,—useful not only to himself, but contributing to the general weal. These are dissipated by migration.

The pastor's family demands permanency.

We take it for granted that the pastor is ordinarily to have a family. Celibacy is not a doctrine of the Bible. "Let the bishop," says the apostle, "be the husband of one wife." Whatever turn we give to this passage, it supposes marriage as the condition of bishops or pastors. It were easy to show, from the reasons of the case, that he who is to be the teacher, the pastor, of a people made up of all sexes, ages, and conditions in life, should himself understand these relations as he can only do by the experiences of the husband and the father. But a doubt must be indulged, if the ministry is to be migratory, whether marriage is desirable. The frequent removal of families is not only difficult, but hazardous. The example of Paul is in point here. As his life was spent in the travels incident to a missionary work, he did not take upon himself the family relation.

The minister's family need, not only on their own account, but for the relations they sustain to the people of his charge, the benefits of a *home*. Home is the best earthly type of heaven. But the home in its completeness is not merely the assemblage of a few persons of different ages and sexes together. It supposes a locality to which we become accustomed,—a dwelling whose features are embalmed in our associations,—a garden, mayhap, or orchard, where we stray to love the flowers and gather the fruits, and to whose paths and nooks our feet and our memories alike become adjusted. It supposes companions of our youth, village or settlement associations, whose "sweet

counsel" has become a part of ourselves. It supposes a place in the house of prayer, where weekly worship and Sabbath-school employ have made walls, ceiling, and seats redolent of holy thoughts and impulses and suggestive of God and his word and its eternal awards. Can these associations be formed, preserved, and made to meet their lifelong uses, when all the subjects of them are changed year by year? A roving youth learns to *love* nothing: the place of love is supplied by a restless desire of novelty, and a vacant habit of life is established, full of valueless or poisonous fruits. Can the Church afford thus to sacrifice the minister's family?

The history of the Church has proved permanency to be beneficial.

A comparison of the past with the present would show that, in respect to stability and consistency of Christian character, the piety of our day must suffer. This is, however, not the place for the comparison.

In one of the New England States there was settled, within the recollection of the writer, in three towns contiguous to each other, three pastors who served their churches for terms respectively of about forty-six, fifty, and sixty years. One of them is but lately deceased, at the age of near one hundred, among the people of his former charge. Those three towns were remarkable beyond example for their morality, their proportion of people professing religion, the power of piety in the lives of its professors, and in the number of men furnished to the gospel ministry. Neither of these three pastors was greatly remarkable for mental vigor, educational accomplishments, or ability in the pulpit or pastoral office. Does any one who steps into an assembly of the ministers of our day and marks their angular features, the paleness of their

countenances, the nervousness of their step, and their anxiety of expression, fancy that he can often detect the probability of a life that will afford fifty, forty, or even thirty years of ministerial labour? They may do more work in the same time than their fathers; but they will waste more of their labour; and, after deducting what truth requires, it is doubted if in a given time they can show even equal results.

Permanency makes provision for the aged.

It is safe to say that its opposite makes none. It is not certain, indeed, that it contemplates the existence of age in the ministry at all. Certain it is that in our day there is a feeling abroad that age has no business in the ministry; and it must be confessed that a management is obtaining currency which obviates the necessity of violence to the sentiment. A plentiful infusion of the ascetic element, a migratory course of labour, an absence of home-affections, an exacting activity of brain made empty from no opportunity for study, a never-ceasing round of pulpit-efforts, an amount of compensation just sufficient to keep the machinery of life in motion; fitfully, if not grudgingly, doled out,—what can a union of these effect but to make life short enough to prevent the necessity of supporting an aged ministry? It is true that under this system there will be no lack of men who will live long enough to outlast the demand for them. Nor need there be any surprise to see men of good abilities, mentally stocked with abundant furniture for long and useful labour, thrown upon an old age of thirty years' prematurity, whose experience shall recall the case of the pauper whose life, like theirs, has been a series of removals, till no place will own him for lack of residence established within it. But can the Church afford to dispense with an aged

ministry? There is no blessing to a people like the residence among them of a pastor familiar with all their public and personal history, too old to bear the heat and burden of the day, yet not too old to have a word of aid and comfort for the acting Christian, of warning for the impenitent, of counsel and consolation for the sick or the dying, and of blessing for childhood. The presence of such a one is redolent of rich remembrances and shining with the light of his Master's countenance. In the household, in the solemn assembly, in the councils of his brethren, the Aaronic perfume envelops him and diffuses a fragrance over all like the breath of the heavenly hills. Yet, if such in our day are not widely esteemed burdens, then is there a false witness abroad.

We know that in the newer settlements of the West, composed in a large degree of young persons, and where there has been a general breaking up of established ideas, it is natural that there should be a call for young men; but the evil of which we speak is not confined to the West. It is as true of the old as of the new sections of our Zion. Such a state of things exists that it might be thought that youth, and not years, brings wisdom. With a permanent pastorate there is no difficulty in providing both a suitable employ and a competent support for the aged but indigent minister.

A permanent ministry has attractions for the young.

A system which makes no provision for its own existence dies of course. The ministry is perpetuated by inducing the young to join its ranks. Christianity supplies a motive sufficient to overcome all necessary difficulties; and the sacred ministry will never lack candidates if obstacles which do not belong in the way are not thrown there. You cannot make men believe,

in our Protestant days, that they ought to become monks in order to preach the gospel; but you may keep them out of it by trying so to convince them. A Christian ministry making its appeal for recruits in the attitude which Christ demands will always find answers in youthful hearts where his love dwells.

But a roving, migratory life does not answer the best native yearnings of the human soul. Special circumstances may demand such; and special persons will be found to supply the want. But God has planted a love of home among the ineradicable affections which grow deepest in our undying natures. Can you wonder that the young man hesitates and the maiden shrinks back when you urge them to a profession the highest which this earth gives scope for, when you clog it with conditions which they feel in their inmost souls that God has not ordained?

Finally, our times demand such a style of effort and character as, on the whole, can be secured only by permanency in the pastoral relation.

Our religion must be so propagated as *to hold what it gets.* Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. A fickle, roving, transitory ministry will as surely produce a shallow, fickle, evanescent piety as face will answer to face in water, or as a man will come in character to resemble, in degree, the God whom he worships. An *itinerating system* complete in its parts, with suitable compensatory provisions, has some advantages for some sorts of work; but alone it can never stem the tide of worldliness and papacy and sin which is sweeping over the world in our day. Poland, it is said, was destroyed because it had no infantry in its army, its military force being wholly a splendid body of cavalry. We want an infantry in the Church of Christ,—a body of Christians who can

stand shoulder to shoulder, dying, if need be, in their places, but never yielding an inch of ground, though the world, the flesh, and the devil sweep the field with fire and iron hail as with a besom. Such a body is the sure product of a Calvinistic theology taught and applied by an educated, permanently-settled ministry.

A consideration of these evils seems to call for the notice of some remedies for their removal. In an office whose relations are so manifold as are those of the Christian ministry, these must of necessity regard a great number of particulars, only a few of which can be mentioned here.

It does not fall within the scope of this essay to consider those qualifications which must, of course, lie at the basis of all ministerial success,—such as piety, fair talents, and a fitting education. It deserves, nevertheless, to be said that the last of these is an essential of a *settled* ministry; since, though a poorly-educated man may succeed as a member of an itineracy, yet as a settled pastor, even in a poorly-educated community, his success will be more than doubtful. Education furnishes the power of progress over the field of sacred studies; it enables its possessor not only to understand, but to *unfold*, subjects,—powers essential to him who is to be the permanent teacher of a particular people. Mental poverty must of necessity revolve in a circle of commonplaces, with which all classes of people soon fail to be satisfied or instructed.

In short, it must be obvious that, to succeed as a pastor, the minister must be fitted for pastoral labour in all those particulars which concern his success, whether they be piety, talent, education, a mind to the work, or a suitable stability of character. When

these are extensively lacking, their place can scarcely be supplied.

These things supposed, there are no obstacles to success, which may not be conceived to admit of a remedy in ordinary cases. And, in the first place,—

Permanency must be the aim of the minister.

It is true of men, as a rule, that they do that which they steadily aim to accomplish. Obstacles in such cases give way, and untoward events gradually adjust themselves in subserviency to controlling principles of action. Settled purposes of life affect the whole character and conduct, and evince themselves to others. It may, therefore, and probably will, change the whole result of settlement and the whole course of ministerial life, in a vast multitude of cases, if the aim from the beginning be permanency, rather than service for a term of months or years.

Let the minister have this for his object, resolving to be turned from it only by uncontrollable necessity, and not only will his own habits of thought and action adjust themselves to it, but they will make their impression on his congregation, and the tendency will be to its establishment as a rule.

Let it be understood that this is the settled policy of church and pastor, and criticism will cease one-half its carpings, and that uneasy looking about for chances to better a settlement already well adjusted, which the expectation of change induces, will find its chief stimulant removed.

It is evident that the aim of which we speak is at present extensively lacking. With many who desire a permanent settlement, the hope of it is but dim; while many others have given it up, if they ever cherished it, and they expect to float about wherever the providence of God may cast their lot, till they

find their labours unacceptable,—when they will feel excused from further ministerial duty, and betake themselves to secular employ. Their minds thus made up, there is no further effort to attain that which they have ceased to expect; while, under a regimen thus without object, the period of their labour is shortened. Such forget that the providences of God are, in a sense, within our control, and that it is not right to attribute to his ordination that which is the result of a want of faith and effort on our own part.

Again, the efforts of the pastor, to be permanent, must be ordered with system and steadiness.

Some of the instances of unsettlement known to the writer have been the obvious result of desultory and aimless habits of ministerial labour. Every man will naturally order his work in accordance with his expectations, regarding the time in which it is to be done.

Permanency will naturally call for system, order, steadiness, and, if we may use a somewhat abused term, *progress*. Under this well-ordered application of his powers, the pastor will naturally and almost certainly grow in Christian knowledge and a maturing piety, and his people will advance with him. Without it, the aims of the people may be ever so good, and changes will be very sure to happen.

The pastor must be fitted to his place.

It is not sufficient that the minister be fitted to the ministry. He must be fitted to exercise it in the particular locality where he is called to labour. Two men in their natural and acquired abilities may be equally adapted to the work of the ministry; yet it by no means follows that they are equally qualified to exercise it among the same people. One may bring to the pastoral office qualities for which one place has

no demand, while in another they would constitute an important element of his strength and usefulness

The world is made up of a great variety of people; and Christianity by no means obliterates the traits which constitute the staple of their dissimilarities. Christianity, it is true, offers but one set of truths to all; but the fruits of it as grown on different samples of character will exhibit an immense diversity in particular conformation, shape, and colouring,—all useful in the world, and agreeable, we doubt not, to the Divine Master, even as the different varieties of the same species of fruit will exhibit an untold variety of shape, colour, and flavour, yet all excellent in their way and degree.

These varieties of people will demand a corresponding variety in ministerial character. To adjust them to their several and proper places will demand some skill and care, and, possibly, more time in deciding upon particular settlements than it has been customary in many cases to give, and, it may be, a modified return to the practices of olden times, when the settlement of a pastor was deemed a great work and set about with much prayer and a careful examination of candidates and places of settlement. Certain it is that the too common idea of any man to any place, and any place to any man, must be changed. With the best and most careful attention which can be given to the subject, some mistakes may be expected to be made, which will render change unavoidable; but these should, and may be, the exceptions instead of the rule. And yet it must not be expected that the pastor can in all cases satisfy every individual mind of his adaptedness to the work in a particular locality; nor must this idea be pressed too far. Disquietude in a church or congregation is some-

times chronic, and those affected with it will lay hold of any pretence, and, among others, of this, to unsettle the pastor. He may have a general and a fair degree of particular fitness for his place: it may be a matter of doubt if one with superior qualifications can be had in case of his removal; or the cause of present difficulty may soon pass away: in all of which cases changes should be avoided on the plea of special inaptitude on the part of the pastor.

The ministry must be adequately supported.

It is utterly futile to talk of the pastoral relation if the Church cannot, or will not, supply the means of livelihood to those who assume its obligations. It is a question so plain that common sense refuses to hear it argued. Her voice decides it authoritatively and at once. The pastor who assumes the spiritual charge of a people for life takes upon himself a work which will task all his energies, and leave him no time nor ability for other employ to eke out his subsistence. He has done *his* duty when he has discharged the work of his profession; but his people have not done theirs till they have put him in possession of a livelihood for himself and his family. They wrong him greatly, they wrong themselves equally, and they wrong their Master more than either, if they subject him to harassing care and anxieties in regard to temporal support.

It cannot be denied that of late the rate of compensation to the ministry has become too low. In the general rise of property, and the enhancement of the cost of living consequent thereon, those dependent upon salaries are left behind, to meet the new rates of obligation with old means. In the times of financial depression the present rates of payment may have been generally sufficient; and yet we know that it

has been for a long time true, that, from their inadequacy in many cases, and their uncertainty of payment in others, a large proportion of the migratory practice of which we complain has arisen.

It has been suspected, too, that some churches have avoided the pastoral relation on account of the increased expenses of it, preferring to hire while it is easy to pay, and to go without a spiritual guide while the church-treasury is empty. Such a course ought not to be charged upon any without the clearest proof; and yet there have been cases which seemed to give colour to such a suspicion.

Such a procedure may seem like economy: yet the case is not a whit wiser than that of him who starves for fear of the expense of eating. It is an effect of the law that like produces like,—that the people who starve their minister should themselves suffer a corresponding famine, as much more terrible than his as spiritual hunger is more destructive than physical. It is not only poor economy, but a grievous sin, to withhold the means of a permanent settlement when there is ability to give it.

The effects of penuriousness do not stop with its first operation. Fickleness on the part of the congregation towards the minister is its twin sister, from which it will not be separated. A people who do not pay their pastor will never cease to discover his failings; for the consciousness of wrong always seeks, with a self-moving certainty, to justify itself, by attributing to its victim some quality or conduct which merits its treatment. "We hate whom we have injured," said Tacitus, eighteen hundred years ago and his aphorism has lost no particle of its truth in all that period, either in its full intent or its minor and incidental applications.

It is a proverb, too, that what costs nothing, men will lightly esteem. They will be very certain to esteem lightly the pastor whom they have failed to pay. In short, when a competent support is withheld, whatever else may be in its favour, a permanent pastorate is out of the question.

There must be a full recognition of the nature of the pastoral work on the part of the pastor himself and of his congregation.

A low estimate of the duties and value of the pastoral office will, of course, render it inefficient in operation and insecure in its tenure. Men will make sacrifices to obtain and retain that which they value. And here it must be said, that the estimation in which the pastoral office is held among a people will depend in no small degree on the pastor himself. If he magnifies his office, or if he despises it, his people will be the first to perceive either fact, and their own estimate will come in time to correspond with his. He is the educa*tor*, and his congregation the educa*ted*. They will look to him for just views on this as on other topics connected with the work of promoting the kingdom of Christ in the world. Hence it will be necessary for him, on proper occasions, to enforce the truth on this as well as on other subjects; and no sense of natural modesty, as being himself concerned, should keep him back from a proper expression in regard to that which is so vital to the prosperity of Christ's kingdom.

The real interests of the pastor and his people are the same, and their duties are correlative. Instruction in this regard is no more a private and personal matter, to be kept out of sight, than any other. The wise pastor will, of course, know how to choose his occasion for speaking of these mutual duties and rela-

tions, so as to forward, and not hinder, the object he has in view.

Finally, it must be always remembered that the pastoral office is a divine institution.

Christ himself, when on earth, gave the great commission, and his apostles, and the Church to this time, have acted in obedience to it. And though, as we have seen, he did not define the term of the pastor's office with a particular people, yet we know that to be most pleasing to him which best secures the object in view. If permanency in the pastoral office does in fact best accomplish the work for which the ministry was instituted, it has not only the sanction of sound judgment, but of Christ's approval. This fact, more than all others, should secure the removal of all obstacles in its way as the general usage of the Church.

THE END.

No. 301.

THE

PRESBYTERIAN SYSTEM.

Numerous systems of church polity have been devised and adopted for the government of the household of faith. The most of them are, by their advocates, represented as taught or sustained by the Scriptures. These representations cannot all be correct. Some of them are at fault. The very fact of so much variety would seem to indicate a want of precision, in this respect, on the part of the sacred writers. It may be, that a slight diversity of form prevailed among the churches founded by the apostles and their associates, according as the churches were composed of Jews or Gentiles, Greeks or Romans. The circumstances of the people, the peculiarities of the place, the customs of the nation, may have had much to do in determining, if not the kind, yet the minor details, of their ecclesiastical organizations. Such was unquestionably the fact. Much that pertained to form was left to be developed, as always, by a fuller experience of the necessities of the case.

But, if it be admitted that no one form of church government is clearly and undeniably indicated in the written word, are there not principles there inculcated, from which we can gather the system, in whole, or in part, which is best adapted to secure the ends for which the Church of Christ is constituted; the system that is most conformed to the teachings and practices

of the apostles, and most conducive to the healthful growth of the Church in truth and goodness? We are Presbyterians,—an organic body of Christians, professing a common faith, practising a common worship, and submitting to a common form of government. In the good providence of God, the pastors and delegates of our churches assembled in solemn convocation, seventy years ago, and, after full consideration, adopted "a plan of government and discipline" for "the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America;" by which plan, or polity, amended subsequently in some minor particulars, our Church, in the administration of its ecclesiastical affairs, has been governed to the present day. Are the principles by which our fathers were guided in the adoption of our ecclesiastical polity conformed to the general principles of the inspired word, and such as are best adapted to secure the true ends of church government?

What are the main principles of our ecclesiastical polity? They may be grouped in a few particulars.

I. The Unity and Universality of the Church of Christ.

It never entered into the minds of the framers of our constitution to limit the grace of God to their own communion. They had their particular views of theological truth, and differed on many points of faith from their brethren of other denominations. They were ardently attached to their time-honored and simple forms of worship. They had long practised, and fully tested, the order and discipline to which they gave at that time a wider expansion. They greatly preferred these forms to all others. But they had no thought of saying, in the self-righteous language of ancient Israel, "The temple of the Lord—the temple

of the Lord—the temple of the Lord are these!" They regarded themselves and their churches as but a branch of the true vine, but an humble part of the twelve tribes of Israel. They asserted, for their faith and order, no monopoly of gospel grace, no exclusive occupancy of the fold of "the Good Shepherd." Most gladly did they recognise the cheering fact, so beautifully expressed by their Lord, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold." They extended, therefore, the fellowship of a common brotherhood to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

This universal brotherhood they regarded, very properly, in a twofold aspect,—as visible and invisible; as seen, and heard, and known of men; or as seen by the heart-searching God. The former they recognised as embracing the whole body of professed believers; the latter, only such as God knows to be his. They discriminated, by this distinction, between the true and the false, the precious and the vile, the clean and the unclean, the genuine and the counterfeit; according to that scripture, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

"The catholic or universal Church which is invisible," they say, "consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."* This definition is clearly conformed to the oracles of

* Conf. of Faith, xxv. 1.

divine truth. This is the Church that the Redeemer "purchased with his own blood," "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." It comprehends the Church militant and the Church triumphant; all the regenerate that are, and that are to be, on the earth, of all nations, tribes, and kindred; with all the ransomed host in glory. This includes not a few who have been denied a place in the visible Church; and some, too, whom the weakness of their faith, or feebleness of their hope, or the wrath of man, or the want of opportunity, has kept from a profession of the true faith. It excludes a vast number, who, in ignorance, or hypocrisy, or by virtue of their birth and lineage, or by intimidation, have been brought within the pale of an external Christianity. This invisible Church is the true Church, the only one. None but they who have been chosen, called, regenerated, and justified by the Holy Spirit, are, or can be, the children of God and heirs of heaven. All such, however regarded by man, and in whatever ecclesiastical connection they are found, Papist or Protestant, Prelatical or Puritan, belong to this honored brotherhood. Nor can one of them be cut off, or cast out, by any authority or ordinance of man, by excision, exclusion, or excommunication, from "the general assembly and church of the first-born." The hypocrite, the unregenerate, the children of the wicked one, may find, and in all ages have found, their way into the Church visible; into the Church invisible, never.

The Church visible, according to the symbols of our fathers, "is also catholic or universal under the gospel,

not confined to one nation, as before under the law," and "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, with their children."* As this catholic or universal Church is not limited, as of old, by blood or national affinities, neither is it by territorial or denominational boundaries. All of every name, "in all ages and places of the world," who "profess the true religion," are enfolded within its ample bosom. None are excluded; none may arrogate to themselves the sole occupancy of the house of God. If asked, "Which, the Episcopal or the Presbyterian, is the true Church?" we reply, "Neither:" just as the foot is not the body, as the door is not the house, as a part is not the whole. We find the visible Church wherever "the true religion" is professed. We accord to all professing Christians a place in this lower house, but not the house itself. We meet them all on the broad platform of a common Christianity. No figment of apostolical succession, or of prelatical grace, separates us from other branches of the Church of Christ; nor yet a peculiar administration of one of the ordinances. We know nothing of "close communion." To the sacramental board, the common heritage of the Church, we receive, and welcome with open arms, the whole household of faith. We "believe in the Catholic Church," excluding none who hold the Head. In the highest sense, ours is a catholic polity.

But, in these admissions, we are far from making light of theological differences. Some portions of the visible church partake more of the spirit of the Master, and conform more fully to the truth, than others. "This Catholic Church," we maintain, "hath been sometimes more, sometimes less, visible And par-

* Conf. of Faith, xxv. 2.

ticular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed, more or less purely in them."* "The purest churches under heaven," as we believe, "are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan."† In accordance with these views, we do not hesitate to speak of "the Pope of Rome" as "that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ and all that is called God."‡ Our large-hearted charity does not require us to regard the Papacy as the true Church, or even a part of it, nor to recognise the ministers of antichrist as a part of the true ministry. With the most strenuous of the anti-Papal portions of the Church of Christ, we protest against its unfounded claims and unrighteous usurpations. We hold to the Catholic Church, but deny that the Roman, or the Greek, or the Anglican, is, has been, or can be, the one only Church of Christ. We abjure alike the Papal and the Prelatical appropriation of the channels of divine grace. We are Catholics, but not Roman Catholics. We are Presbyterians, but Christians more, "fellow-citizens with the saints" of every name, "and of the household of God."

Our system also recognises,

II. THE SUBDIVISION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INTO PARTICULAR CHURCHES.

The necessity of such a distinction is obvious. "As the immense multitude," who constitute the universal Church, "cannot meet together, in one place, to hold

* Conf. of Faith, xxv. 4. † Conf. of Faith, xxv. 5.
‡ Conf. of Faith, xxv. 6.

communion, or to worship God, it is reasonable, and warranted by Scripture example, that they should be divided into many particular churches."* The ἐκκλησία of the sacred writers, though properly denoting a convocation or assembly, is, at times, to be understood of the whole body of believers. More commonly, however, it is to be received literally, as denoting a particular congregation of real or professing Christians. The Scriptures speak of "the churches of God," "of Christ," "of the saints," "of the Gentiles," "of Judea," "of Asia," "of Galatia," and "of Macedonia;" "the church of Ephesus," "of Smyrna," "of Sardis," and others.

Any number of Christian people "professing the true religion," and meeting statedly for the worship of God and for the administration of Christian ordinances, is a church, whatever may be the peculiarities of their discipline or the mode of their organization. They may be more or less pure in faith and scriptural in worship; more or less conformed, in their ecclesiastical order, to the apostolical model; and yet be entitled to the rights and privileges of a Christian church.

Our Form of Government treats of the "ordinances in a particular church," "regularly constituted with its proper officers;" "of the church session" as the officers "of a particular congregation;" of "a church" "without a pastor," and of the watch to be kept over "the members of the church" by "the church session." It requires, at the installation of officers in a particular congregation, an answer to the question, "Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother," or these brethren? It specifies that candidates for the ministry are to be "regular

* Form of Govt., ii. 3.

members of some particular church;" shows how a bishop is to "be translated from one church to another," and what "any church desiring to call a settled minister" is to do; and says that the installment, in such a case, "consists in constituting a pastoral relation between him and the people of that particular church."* It uses the words "congregation" and "church" indiscriminately, as denoting the particular, or local, association of believers in a covenant relation.

Our system, "as strictly interpreted by its standards," therefore, recognises not only "one comprehensive and general Church," as is right and proper, but, as really and truly as any other system, "the existence of local churches," having all the appropriate functions of a church; with a distinct membership, associated by covenant; with officers chosen by themselves; dependent on no other organization, or "specified order" of individuals beyond and above them, for the administration of the ordinances, for the exercise of internal discipline, and for the management of their particular affairs. Strange as it may seem to those who speak disparagingly of the autonomy of our congregations or churches, and so frequently ring the changes upon "the iron rule of Presbytery," "understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm," our Form of Government nowhere specifies the mode of proceeding in the organization of our particular churches; nowhere defines the "antecedent processes" of a regular formation, nor "the members of a specified order" through whom the organization is to be effected; nowhere speaks of any set forms as "essential to their correct and scriptural existence;" but leaves the people to proceed in such a way as their

* Form of Govt., vii., ix., xiii., xiv., xvi.

own judgment may dictate. "A particular church," it says, "consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the Holy Scriptures, and submitting to a certain form of government."* Nothing can be more liberal, or savor less of the rigid rule of sect.

As has been said in praise of a rival system, we may say of our own, "There is no precise law and pattern of organization, which must be adhered to, and a deviation from which invalidates the proceeding. The whole is a matter of free consent and mutual adjustment. Upon the platform of their common faith, the associated disciples, by their agreement with each other, erect their own church organization,—an organization complete within itself, and rightfully independent of every other." Not a word in our Constitution teaches otherwise. The church may call in the aid of one or more of the ministry, or apply to a Presbytery to aid them in their organization; but not necessarily. They may choose to associate with other churches similarly constituted, or not. If they approve "of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in these United States,"† they may be admitted to the fellowship of our churches, and not a word asked as to the antecedent processes of their formation.

To all intents and purposes, theoretically and practically, each of our congregations of believers is a complete church within itself,—as truly so as a Congregational church. "It is," to use the words of another, "a young republic, having its popular assemblies, its delegated representatives, its local tribunal, its independent by-laws, and the entire and exclusive

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* Form of Govt., ii. 4. † Form of Govt., xiii. 4.

management of all matters which are purely local Each congregation is thus a commonwealth, as truly as each synod. It has its own important and independent sphere of action, and is a type of the general government of the whole Church. Here the laity—the people—rule and reign."*

The same necessity of mutual watchfulness, that prompts the individual Christian to associate himself with other Christians by covenant engagements, may prompt the individual church to associate with other churches; but it loses thereby nothing of its prerogatives as a church of Christ. It is none the less a church because it enjoys the orderly fellowship of other similar organizations. It enjoys all the advantages of a Congregational church, and more. It secures, by our system, peculiar privileges. What it loses of independency is of its own preference, and is more than compensated by what it gains.

Advancing upon these principles, we recognise also,

III. An Organized Confederacy of Particular Churches.

The right of any number of similarly-constituted churches to combine and associate together, under specified conditions not involving a sacrifice of principle, for mutual edification and for the advancement of the common interests of truth and godliness, cannot be questioned. If, as claimed by the churches of another denomination, "each local society of believers, having once, by its own act, been constituted as a church, is therefore self-complete, and self-controlling, and rightfully independent of the jurisdiction of others," then, surely, it may determine for itself to

* "Ecclesiastical Republicanism," by Thomas Smyth, p. 81.

form a partnership with others similarly organized. The right of self-control must include the right of forming alliances with others; as in the case of the sexes and the conjugal union; as in the case of mercantile partnerships; or as in the union of political states. If this right be denied to other churches, we claim for our own a higher liberty, a better system of ecclesiastical polity, more complete, and, to say the least, not less scriptural."

Nothing in God's word, whether of precept or practice, denies this right to the local church, or forbids its exercise. Much appears in both to favor it. The Jewish Church was one body. Whatever were the provisions for keeping up the worship of God on the Sabbath, previous to the Captivity, and however extensively synagogues, or churches, were organized subsequently, the people were one, and their Church one. A particular community of Israelites, residents of the same neighborhood, might band together as a קהל, an ἐκκλησία, a congregation, a church; and meet statedly, on the Sabbath and at other times, for the celebration of divine worship; and possess all the elements of completeness as an organized association; yet they did not thereby cease to be part and parcel of that ecclesiastical commonwealth the pattern of which was shown in the holy mount, extending over the whole land of Israel. It formed no part of the divine counsel to institute a system of local organizations, each of which should be rightfully and actually subject to no extraneous control, under law to no higher organization, nor in any sense amenable to other churches, "except as it freely submits to and invites" their counsel on special occasions. The chosen people of God were bound together by the strong bonds of family, kindred, tribe, and a common progenitor, in

the ecclesiastical as well as the political commonwealth.

The first Christian churches were gathered out of the Jewish Church. As followers of Christ, they had been taught by their Lord to look upon themselves as members one of another; that, under the new dispensation, believers were more one than ever; that, instead of being released from the obligation of a visible recognition of brotherhood, a far higher obligation now rested on them, as partakers of divine grace, to give a practical demonstration of their oneness with Christ and with each other. Their inspired teachers urged upon them this specific duty. They illustrated this oneness by a reference, as we have seen, to the human body. They taught, not merely that the individual was one with the members of a local church, as at Philippi or Corinth, but that every local church was itself but an inseparable member of the body of believers, as truly as the hand, or the foot, of the human body; that none were independent of others.

Accordingly, we find them banding together as one, for the promotion of a common cause,—the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. They were more in number, even in Jerusalem, than could meet together statedly for the worship of God; and yet they were but one Church, though composed of many congregations. Surrounded by eager foes ever watchful for their destruction, they felt the need of combination, of mutual assistance in every practicable form. Their common interests are made the care of all. Councils or synods are convened, occasionally at first, and then statedly, for advisement and adjudication. They recognise a higher jurisdiction than the brotherhood of a local church. They act on the grand principle that particular congregations, made such by local necessi-

ties, are but parts of one great ecclesiastical commonwealth, embracing all of every name and nation who confess Christ before men. This principle was thus early incorporated into their whole polity, and transmitted to successive generations. It has been adopted, from that day to the present time, by all branches of the visible Church, save the Brownists and Independents, and, it may be, some few fragmentary sects of but little note.

Neither the teaching of Scripture, therefore, nor the practice of the early churches, militates in the slightest degree against the right and privilege, on the part of a particular church of entering, into a permanent confederacy with other churches. It is an inherent right. If deemed expedient in a particular case, country, or communion, it may be exercised. The Great Charter, from which all our churches derive their constitution, favors it. It seems to grow out of the very fundamental principles of the Bible.

The question, then, of an organized confederacy of churches becomes, in a measure, one of expediency. Is it best for the congregations of an extended communion to be thus banded together? Are there important ends to be secured without hazard to Christian liberty, by such an arrangement? If government is needed in the smaller circle, is it not in the larger? If in the family, is it not in the community of families? May every household set itself up to be independent of all others, and every hamlet, village, town, or city make the same demand? Is it thus that well-ordered and prosperous states are constituted and conducted? Man is the same, whether in the Church or the State. The principles applicable to his government in the one are just as applicable in the other. Society, ecclesiastical as well as political, needs to be bound together

by visible joints and bands. Why is it that, not only in monarchical Europe, but also in republican America, and even in democratic New England, the system of confederation pervades the whole body politic? Families of diverse origin, whose lot is cast in the same general vicinity, prompted by a very natural regard for their common welfare, resolve themselves into an organized municipality,—a town, a borough, a city. The several towns of the same locality, in order to guard against encroachment and to provide for mutual interests, assume the form of a *comitatus*, or county; counties become states; and states or commonwealths, a confederated republic, a consolidated nation, a kingdom, an empire.

The necessity of such a system, in order to the peace, the comfort, the freedom, and the progressive development of the human family, in all matters pertaining to the body politic, will not be questioned by the American people. We have no thought of any other system. We are theoretically and practically republicans,—nothing but republicans. The principle is embodied in the Constitution of every one of the States; and particularly in the Constitution of the United States, that "guarantees to every State in this Union a republican form of government."* This great exponent of republicanism, susceptible as it may be of slight amendments, we justly regard as the charter of our rights, the palladium, not of bondage, but of freedom. In the providence of God, it has been the salvation, as it is the glory, of our land. At a period of distrust, depression, and wide-spread bankruptcy, when discord and jealousy pervaded the land, when agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial enterprise

* Art. IV. Sect. 4.

was almost extinguished, and ruin hung like a pall over the country, the fathers met in council and sought a remedy for these impending evils. A government must be devised and inaugurated more stable and efficient than the system of independency then prevailing. What shall it be?

It never entered into the thoughts of the most ultra-democratic of that memorable convention, that the best possible government for the millions of the American people would be a return to the simple forms of the town-meeting; to a system in which every little knot of neighbors, banding together as a municipality, is to be perfectly "independent of the jurisdiction of all others;" "where the influences exerted" by these communities "over one another are moral merely, and not magisterial; where each is held to be free from the control of all the others, free even from any interference on their part, except as it assents to and invites it; where all, in a word, while allied closely by confidence and friendship, by kindred impulses and similar aims, are uncombined in any structure of laws, and therefore, though free to advise, are not at liberty to dictate," the only visible exemplification of fellowship and union being an "occasional call of each upon the others for counsel and advice." This system, the boast of Independency, from one of whose most zealous advocates this description is taken, had in part prevailed too long in the State, and was itself one of the evils under which the country groaned. As a political theory, it could not have been put into practice even where embraced ecclesiastically.

"In order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and

secure the blessings of liberty"* to themselves and their posterity, the people of the United States ordained and established a political Constitution, which to this day has withstood every assault and been the greatest bulwark of political freedom. It has made of numerous sovereign States one united people, binding together their discordant interests, prompting them to consult and labor for the common weal, and giving them character and influence in the household of nations. It has made us, by the blessing of God, a prosperous, powerful, and happy people. It has secured to the individual, and to the humblest of the States, the utmost liberty consistent with safety and strength, guarding them from all encroachment. Well may we prize it, cherish it, cling to it, and plead with the God of nations that it may be perpetual.

The Church, more than the State, is, and should be, one. By virtue of its divine constitution, it is compacted and knit together in the bonds of a holy love. Its various portions have common sympathies, relations, and interests. Reason, Scripture, and experience teach that, where the churches of a territory, state, province, or nation have the same or similar views of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline, it is both right and wise to institute or adopt some organized mode of exhibiting and confirming their union; thereby also to secure the rights, privileges, and interests which pertain to them as Christians and churches, and which are ever liable to be brought into jeopardy.

On these principles the framers of our ecclesiastical Constitution acted. They aimed to give embodiment as well as expression to the fellowship of the churches; to deepen the interest of each in the other; to furnish

* Preamble to the "Constitution of the United States of America."

the most ample guarantees of mutual regard; to provide for the denomination a suitable ministry; to preserve them from the encroachments of ignorance, superstition, inordinate ambition, and immorality in the pulpit; to secure the most abundant redress from the injustice of intolerance and bigotry; to guard in the most effectual manner the right of private judgment, and to maintain the unfettered exercise of Christian liberty. They sought to strengthen each others' hearts and hands in the good work of advancing the kingdom of holiness in their own souls, and in the souls of perishing men throughout the land and throughout the world.

These men were staunch republicans and true patriots,—none more so,—true friends of Washington and the American Congress. They had laid their all on the altar of liberty,—perilled every thing in their unwavering opposition to tyranny and oppression. None more heartily and steadily maintained the rights of the people as proclaimed, not in "glittering and sounding generalities," but in "the words of truth and soberness" embodied in the Declaration of Independence. John Witherspoon, the scholar, the senator, and the divine, the friend of freedom and the uncompromising foe of oppression, was the fitting representative of the Presbyterian Church when he appended his name to that national protest. They accepted his act as their own, and stood by him to the end. The men who assembled in the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1786 and 1787, by whom our ecclesiastical platform was constructed, had but just come from the scenes of that memorable struggle which gave freedom to the nation. At the very time when the fathers of the Republic were laying the foundations and erecting the superstructure of our political Con-

stitution, the fathers of the Presbyterian Church were accomplishing a similar work for their religious commonwealth.

The period was auspicious. Questions pertaining to the science of human government had excited the utmost attention, had been discussed most freely, and had been deeply pondered, from the earlier stages of the great contest for freedom. The ablest writers of the age were tasking their energies, and contributing to the formation of a healthful public sentiment. Never before, at least on this side of the great sea, had the human mind been so thoroughly roused in relation to human rights. Jealous of their blood-bought liberties, and sensitive to the last degree in the matter of ecclesiastical domination, having but just escaped from the impending visitation of a lordly hierarchy from a foreign shore, they were the last men in the world to impose the yoke of an "iron rule" upon the necks of their brethren. They were laymen as well as clergymen. Genuine haters of popery and prelacy, they could not but favor, and to their utmost promote, the parity of believers, of churches, and of the ministry.

"God alone," they said, "is the Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship." They maintained, therefore, that "the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion," are "universal and unalienable;" and "that, in perfect consistency with" this "principle of common right, every Christian church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath

appointed."* What could be asked for more, even by Independency itself?

The result of their deliberations is embodied in a written Constitution, or form of government, discipline, and worship, conformed in a remarkable degree, as might have been expected, to the political system of our country, as well as to the Scriptures of divine truth; a Constitution in which, while the rights of the individual, and of each particular church, are carefully secured, the unity and the community of the whole brotherhood of believers, and especially of the denomination, are fully recognised and practically illustrated; a Constitution which, for all the important ends of church government and discipline, may well challenge a comparison with any and every other; a Constitution of which we have no need to be ashamed.

Some recognition of the fellowship of the churches, and some responsibility on the part of particular churches one to another, are deemed necessary even among our Independent and Congregational brethren. If we have our Presbyteries, they have their Associations and Consociations, their Councils and Conferences. If we have our Synods, they have their General Conferences, Conventions, and Associations. If we have our General Assembly, they have their Cambridge, Saybrook, and Albany Synods, or Congregational Unions. Their necessities, as well as ours, constrain them to the adoption of these principles.

As individual believers need the watch and care of a confederated Church united by "solemn league and covenant" in one body, so, also, individual churches are to regard themselves as members of the same body, and, by some visible organization, provide for

* Form of Govt., i. 1, 2.

their mutual inspection. As the lone Christian is prone to wander and fall, so is the lone church. The experience of the present and of every past age teaches us, in the words of our Constitution, that "the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error," and may be "so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan."* If the fall of one professing Christian is an evil to be carefully avoided and prevented, much more the fall of a whole church. Why guard, in ecclesiastical systems, so carefully against the one, and not the other? Why provide an organization in the one instance, and none in the other?

The necessity of making application for the counsel and co-operation of other churches is not denied by even the most strenuous advocates of Independency. They differ from us, however, as to the form or mode by which this mutual assistance is to be secured. Shall it be perfectly systematized, or left to mere exigencies? Shall it be regulated by fixed principles and determinate rules, as in a written constitution, or shall usage and tradition alone be regarded? Shall the combination of sister churches be such as to require periodical convocations, or shall these be only occasional? Shall the confederacy be of the same churches and their pastors, or shall the membership in every particular instance be determined by the parties seeking counsel? Shall the power and authority of these ecclesiastical bodies be exercised in accordance with constitutional law and with a definite responsibility, or by an evanescent convention, whose existence begins and ends with the occasion that calls them together, and whose responsibility terminates with their existence

* Conf. of Faith, xxv. 5.

as a temporary organization? It is not a question as to the nature of this power. In both connections it is the same. "All church power," we maintain, "whether exercised by the body in general, or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say," "the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners;" "no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience, in virtue of their own authority; and" "all their decisions should be founded on the Word of God." So say our standards. "Their power is wholly moral or spiritual, and that only ministerial and declarative."*

In determining these points of difference, it is well to consult those who have been trained and have passed their lives in New England, under the operation of a system commended so zealously at the present time as "a more excellent way" than our own.

"Synods orderly assembled," say the constructors of the Cambridge platform, in 1648, "and rightly proceeding according to the pattern, Acts xv. we acknowledge as the ordinance of Christ; and though not absolutely necessary to the being, yet many times, through the iniquity of men and perverseness of times, necessary to the well-being, of churches, for the establishment of truth and peace therein."†

"The Consociation of churches," says the famous Richard Mather of Dorchester, Mass., in 1639, "into classes and synods, we hold to be lawful, and in some cases necessary; as, namely, in things that are not peculiar to one church, but common to them all. And likewise when a church is not able to end any matter

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* Form of Govt., i. 7; viii. 2. † Chap. xvi. 1.

which concerns only themselves, then they are to seek for counsel and advice from neighbor churches."*

"All the churches," observes John Cotton of Boston, "the patriarch of New-England," in 1644, "have the liberty of sending their messengers, to debate and determine, in a synod, such matters as do concern them all." Such synods "have power, by the grace of Christ, not only to give light and counsel in matter of truth and practice, but also to command and enjoin the things to be believed and done;" as also "to decree and publish such ordinances as may conduce according to God unto" "reformation."† It is said of Mr. Cotton, that he "would sometimes bewail the deficiency of the churches in New England in this particular;" and that, not long before his decease, he drew up certain "propositions concerning the consociation and communion of churches," which were published in 1675.‡

"We must agree," said Thomas Hooker of Hartford, the patriarch of Connecticut, a short time before his decease, in 1647, "upon constant meetings of ministers, and settle the consociation of churches, or else we are utterly undone."§

The question, "Whether, according to the word of God, there ought to be a Consociation of churches, and what should be the manner of it?" was submitted, by the General Court of Massachusetts, to a Synod convened at Boston in 1662; and, "with a marvellous unanimity, not one elder, nor so much as two brethren in all that reverend assembly, dissenting,"‖ they

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* "Congregational Order," p. 25.

† "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven," pp. 45, 57, 58.

‡ "The Panoplist," x. 327.

§ "Magnalia Christi Americana," ii. 232.

‖ "The Panoplist," x. 327.

answered the first part of the inquiry in the affirmative. "The churches of Christ," they said, "in this country having so good an opportunity for it, it is meet to be commended to them as their duty thus to consociate."*

Trumbull, the historian of Connecticut, informs us that, at the commencement of the last century, "the state of the churches was lamentable with respect to their general order, government, and discipline;" "that, for the want of a more general and energetic government, many churches ran into confusion; that councils were not sufficient to relieve the aggrieved and restore peace. As there was no general rule for the calling of councils, council was called against council, and opposite results were given upon the same cases, to the reproach of councils and the wounding of religion. Aggrieved churches and brethren were discouraged, as in this way their case seemed to be without remedy. There was no such thing, in this way, as bringing their difficulties to a final issue." "A great majority of the Legislature and clergy in Connecticut were for the association of ministers and the consociation of churches." A synod was convened at Saybrook, in 1708, which "provided for one or more consociations in each county, which should be standing, known, and responsible tribunals, with appellate and final jurisdiction."† The design of the framers of the Saybrook Platform was, "to prevent picked councils, *ex parte* councils, and councils upon councils which should give contradictory results and plunge the churches into deeper troubles."‡ The plan of confederation went into very general use; and, after it "had time to operate, the churches became more

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* "Magnalia," ii. 257. † "Complete History of Connecticut," i. 507.
‡ "Congregational Order," pp. 34, 35.

regular and harmonious in their discipline, enjoyed more general peace, and their numbers constantly increased."*

At the expiration of more than a century, during which period the churches of Massachusetts had passed through a sea of troubles, and had been repeatedly distracted and rent asunder by internal commotions, attention was again turned to the consociation of the churches. In an elaborate report, made in 1815, to the General Association, by such men as the Rev. Drs. Morse, Worcester, Woods, Austin, Lyman, and Cooley, reference is made to the counsel of their early divines, and it is affirmed that "the consequences of disregarding this sound advice have been witnessed in the state of the churches in Massachusetts for a century past, and are apparent in their present state." "So distracted," they say, "is the state of our ecclesiastical affairs, and so vague and loose and weak the principle of union, that churches in our fellowship may go to the greatest length of apostasy, without any inspection, and without losing that indefinite fellowship with us which they before enjoyed." "There is no explicit acknowledgment of mutual responsibility, and no definite intelligible statement of reciprocal rights and duties, or of the method of intercourse." "We are under a kind of necessity of allowing our disorderly members to call in churches the most defective in Christian character, to censure our principles, to overturn our internal discipline, to sanction disorder and heresy, and to attack the reputation of faithful ministers." "We have no effectual means of keeping corrupt or incompetent men from entering into the ministry and obtaining ordination. A corrupt church,

* Trumbull, ii. 17.

with a heretical minister, has opportunity to exert a corrupting influence upon the whole body of Congregational churches. The great evil here complained of is at present protected and suffered to spread, without any effort for its cure." "We have no regular, acknowledged, and uniform method of trying a minister for any violation of the laws of Christ."

The only remedy provided by the system, for the removal of these evils, is the calling of occasional councils, by mutual choice, or by an aggrieved party. Of mutual councils, Dr. Morse and his associates say, "Such occasional, transient bodies, however useful they may sometimes be in composing particular disturbances, can afford no regular and permanent support to the friends of religious order or do any thing effectually to restrain offenders. Mutual councils, in present circumstances, may be evaded. Offenders may refuse to join in the choice of them or to submit to their decisions." "Nor is it determined among our churches," they add, "in what cases councils are to be called; nor what is the extent of their jurisdiction, or the authority of their results. Mutual councils, on the present plan, may be multiplied without limits. Difficulties may be so managed that there shall be no end of strife." "Mutual councils, at present, are constituted in a manner extremely unfavorable to impartiality, justice, and unanimity; so that there is but little prospect of a decision which will give satisfaction to the parties. Councils are chosen in a time of contention, when the minds of all concerned are liable to irritation, if not to bitterness. And, what is more, they are chosen by the contending parties; and the offender, however exceptionable his character and however flagrant his crimes, has an equal influence in constituting the tribunal with the other party. Doubt-

less he will make it his object to select men who will be his particular friends and advocates,—not those who will be judicious and impartial." "As circumstances are, it is by no means strange that a trial before a mutual council is frequently nothing but a scene of animosity and strife, in which the parties, aided by two divisions of the council, come forward to contend for victory. The evil here complained of is like that which would be felt by civil society if courts of justice, instead of being permanent bodies, organized in a manner wisely calculated to exclude all injustice and respect of persons, should depend for their existence and continuance on the will of disagreeing parties, and so should, in fact, be the offspring of self-interest, dishonesty, and strife."

"An *ex parte* council," they say, "resorted to as a substitute for a mutual council, is still more exceptionable. It will, from the very nature of the case, be regarded with suspicion, and can never have the power of terminating a contention. A second *ex parte* council may be called to contravene the decision of the first; and so on without end."*

Not less decided and definite are the objections urged by President Dwight against this whole system. He speaks of "a select council" as "a judicatory most unhappily constituted." "It seems absolutely necessary," he says, "that every ecclesiastical body should have its tribunal of appeals." This tribunal, he thinks, should be "a standing body," "always existing, of acknowledged authority," "a court of record, having a regular system of precedents." And beyond this, he judges, there should be "a still superior tribunal, to receive appeals in cases where they are obviously

* "The Panoplist," xi. 361–368.

necessary."* He vastly preferred the Presbyterian to the Congregational way.

If, at the expiration of nearly two hundred years, during which the New England system had been on trial, its ablest divines, the men of ripest experience, familiar from their childhood with its workings and with its history, most trusted and trustworthy, are constrained thus to deplore its obvious defects and manifest evils, we wonder not that President Edwards, in 1750, should have said, "I have long been perfectly out of conceit of our unsettled, independent, confused way of church government in this land; and the Presbyterian way has ever appeared to me most agreeable to the word of God and the reason and nature of things."†

The testimony of these venerated men applies just as forcibly now, as then, to the system of which they complained. The evils specified are incident to the system. Let error creep into the churches, as in the days of Stoddard and Edwards, or as in the days of Morse and Channing, and what is to hinder the spread of defection from the faith? If a gifted pastor makes an excursion into the regions of speculation, and returns with perverted views of "God in Christ," of the great sacrifice for sin, and of regeneration, who but his own church are to call him to account? And, if they sustain him, who is to expostulate with them, and save the community from the inroads of false doctrine, especially if they proclaim their independence of all superior jurisdiction? Under such a system, who can tell whether a church, or its pastor, is sound in the faith or not, save by direct investigation? Everybody knows what a Presbyterian is. A man, or

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* "Theology," Ser. 162. † "Life," by Dwight, p. 412.

a church, may be Congregationalist, and yet be Arminian, Socinian, or Universalist. The errorist invariably finds our system too unyielding and uncomfortable. He greatly prefers its opposite. When churches or ministers become restive under the wholesome restraints of our ecclesiastical polity, they very readily adopt a system under which they can demand to be let alone and can insist upon the right of believing and teaching as they please.

Ours, we believe, is the more orderly, the "more excellent way." While the particular church retains, and is sustained in, the right of conducting its internal affairs in its own way, subject only to the fundamental law of the confederacy, as in all well-ordered states, the utmost care is taken that the common interests of truth and goodness shall suffer no damage. If the poorest of the flock is aggrieved, provision the most ample and inexpensive is made for redress. From the Session he may appeal to the Presbytery,—a body not created at the will of the parties for the mere occasion, but, like our courts of justice, permanent and responsible. Thence, too, he may go to the Synod and the Assembly, as in civil cases to the Superior and the Supreme Court. The rich may not oppress the poor, nor an overbearing party in the church trample on the weak. The pastor may not, on the one hand, play the despot and set at naught all authority, nor, on the other hand, be crushed by a cruel and cunning despotism on the part of a self-constituted clique of leaders in the church. An effectual shield is furnished in either case. Every wrong may be redressed, every fatal error be arrested, every withered branch removed, without encroachment on inherent rights, or prejudice to the liberties of the people and their pastors.

The purity of the pulpit cannot be too effectually

secured. Ecclesiastical history is, on almost every page, laden with the evils consequent upon the ministry of the ignorant, the weak, the covetous, the crafty, and the unprincipled. Our system aims to keep the pulpit pure. Free to choose, without restraint, their own religious teachers, our churches are yet protected from imbecility and imposition, from heretical pravity and impiety, on the part of those who desire the bishop's office, by the reference of the call to a standing council, (the Presbytery,) whose position and relations give them abundant facilities for testing the gifts, determining the faith, and trying the spirits of candidates for the honors and responsibilities of the pastoral work. The doors of the sanctuary are to be shut against the unworthy, and intruders are to be thrust out. This great end of our ecclesiastical polity has thus far been well attained. When the most baleful errors have pervaded other communions, and when Independency has proved in this respect a failure, our own churches, by the will of God, have been kept pure.

This system of confederated councils, therefore, we maintain, is worthy of all confidence. It is sanctioned by the almost unanimous suffrages of the Christian world, being tacitly adopted even where in theory it is rejected. It is based, moreover, upon those principles of government which underlie every well-ordered political state. It accords admirably with the theory and spirit of our own municipal institutions, and secures all the ends of government, with as few incidental evils as can well be expected in a world of so much selfishness, prejudice, and corruption.

Nor is it the least of its excellencies that it requires us to "go by a book;" that the metes and bounds of our constitutional government are known, recorded on the printed page, and made a matter of covenant;

that nothing is left to conjecture or tradition, but all the essentials of faith, order, and discipline made certain. Scripture is infinitely to be preferred to tradition; written law, to conventional usage. The definite is vastly better than the indefinite,—far less liable to perversion and abuse; more available for all the legitimate ends of government; more conducive to union, concord, strength; and more reliable for the oppressed. We have a book, and we "go by a book;" not the compilation of some self-appointed scribe or annalist, but the work of the whole Church, well digested and heartily adopted. It is one of the felicities of our system, that, when one of our standing councils convenes, the question is not asked, "What is the usage, what the custom?" as in those evanescent Conventions where nothing is fixed, nothing certain. We are not left to the treacherous and varying memories, impulses, whims, fancies, or prejudices of self-constituted leaders, who may choose to put their own interpretation on traditionary forms.

Another distinctive principle of our ecclesiastical polity, and the last to be enumerated, is

IV. A REPRESENTATIVE ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT.

In all constitutional governments, where the power emanates from the people, the system of delegation prevails. It grows out of the nature of the case. Once only, or but seldom, in the year, can the town assemble in mass for the supervision of their common interests. If a street is to be graded, a road repaired, a ditch dug, a post set, a tree planted, a walk laid, a pond drained, a fence built, the town-house swept, a broken sash repaired, a leak mended, a door re-hung, or a pulley adjusted, must the whole town be called

together? In the administration of justice, in matters of dispute between neighbors, in the adjudication of the claims of the grocer, the baker, the tailor, the hatter, the seamstress, and the milliner, must the whole town be summoned to hear, consider, and determine? Are the nice and intricate questions of civil and criminal law, and every judicial process against a debtor, a pilferer, a forger, a burglar, a midnight brawler, a boxer, a murderer, to be determined in "town meeting"? The most ultra democrat of the land never ventured his reputation on such a theory. All such matters are better intrusted to the hands of a chosen few,—the selectmen, the aldermen, the standing committee, the supervisors. The town must needs act, in a thousand things, by proxy, by representation, by officials. It is the only rational mode. The principle pervades our whole body politic.

Our system of church government herein conforms to the most approved precedents, the dictates of reason, and the Scripture model. We have our selectmen, aldermen, or elders, in every church, chosen by the people from their own number, to administer the discipline, watch at the door, and supervise the affairs of God's house. Whatever may be thought of, what some among us maintain, the divine warrant of the eldership, none can deny, not even the most strenuous advocates of the people's power, or so much as question, the right of any church to adopt, if it suits them best, the representative form in the government of their fraternity. It is clearly at their option to commit so much of the supervision of their community as may be deemed best, into the hands of a session or standing committee. Nothing in God's word forbids it. Congregationalism claims it as an inherent right, to determine in what form church government is to

be administered. It exercises the right in numerous instances. Its churches transact their business, to a great extent, by committees. The standing committee is in effect a session.

The principle prevails more or less in every church "It must often happen," says Dr. Chalmers, "that even under the most democratic economy of a congregation, the minister virtually obtains his office by the appointment of the few, and only with the acquiescence of the many. In every assemblage of human beings, this is the method by which all their proceedings are really carried forward. The ascendency of worth, or talent, or station, or some other natural influence, is ever sure to vest the power of originating with the few, and to leave nothing with the many but the power of a *veto;* nay, even, in many instances, to disarm them of that power."*

The pastor of a Congregational church in the city of New York was asked, not long since, "Have you not ruling elders in your church?" and the instant reply was, "Most certainly." "And is it not so in all your churches?" "Certainly." Such being the inevitable tendency of all democracies, we avail ourselves of the principle. Seeing that, whether officially or unofficially, the power will be exercised, we prefer to make it a responsible power,—to hold the few accountable to the many, by official trust, and so to guard the rights of all most effectually. Nothing is more to be deprecated in any government, civil or ecclesiastical, than irresponsible power, whether exercised by lord bishops or lord brethren.

This delegation of authority implies no sacrifice of equality or liberty. The senator is but a servant.

* "Christian and Civic Economy," i. 236.

The Presbyterian elder, as truly as the Congregational deacon, is but one of the people, chosen to minister in things pertaining to God, for his brethren. This cherished principle of democracy pervades our whole ecclesiastical polity. The pastor is but one of the people. In all our assemblies—sessional, presbyterial, synodical—the popular element is at the least numerically equal with the clerical.

Such an administration greatly relieves the people,—frees them from needless burdens. Why should a whole church be called away from their daily avocations to settle every little dispute or difficulty or adjust every little question of duty or expediency? Or, since it cannot be fully convened save on the Sabbath, why must the holy hours be appropriated to the business of the week? The Christian enters the church not to be a ruler, or a judge; not to be trained for the forum or the bench; but to honor Christ in his ordinances and to advance the kingdom of holiness among men. Freed from the immediate responsibilities and burdens of the ruler and the judge, he is more at liberty to pursue his appropriate work and secure the higher ends of church fellowship.

The prerogative of sitting in judgment on the admission of members to the church is claimed, in some quarters, for all the brethren. Was it so in the beginning? The Church is not a mere voluntary organization, but a divine institution. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are of Christ. Admission to these sacraments is a holy privilege; exclusion from them, an awfully serious thing. Are the body of the faithful, in any church as ordinarily constituted, young and old, learned and unlearned, experienced or unexperienced, properly qualified to determine such questions? Where in the New Testament does it

appear that the question of admission to the ordinances was, in any case, decided by the suffrages of the brethren already admitted? Is there any such case on the sacred record? Was baptism administered only on the vote of the congregation?

The numerous details of church discipline call for the exercise of the highest wisdom. As in the judiciary, it is safer far to commit the supervision of such affairs to a bench of prudent men, selected with special reference to their fitness for such a work. Great injury is often done to religion by the publicity given to matters of indelicacy that transpire in the trial of scandals before a church. We greatly prefer that such processes should be conducted with as little publicity as the ends of truth require. A participation in the responsibilities of an ecclesiastical tribunal is by no means needful to the Christian's growth. The members of our own churches, we think, show their profiting quite as much as others.

To the pastor of a church the eldership is of incalculable service. Often called to act in circumstances demanding no small amount of caution, prudence, and judgment, on the one hand, or of energy, promptness, and dispatch on the other, he finds in his eldership the very best counsel that the case admits. Many of the pastors of New England have lamented this defect in the policy of their churches. It takes away, in many instances, the temptation, on the part of the pastor, of assuming the responsibility of exercising the people's power without reference or consultation,—of exercising the one-man power.

A distinguished divine of New England* gave expression, one hundred and fifty years ago, to his fore-

* Rev. Cotton Mather, D.D.

bodings, in these words:—"When churches have some hundreds of souls under their discipline, but the single pastors are not strengthened with consistories of elders, or an agreeable number of wise and good and grave men, chosen to join with the pastor as their president in that part of his work which concerns the well-ruling of the flock, their discipline will by degrees be utterly lost; the grossest offenders will by degrees, and through parties, be scarce to be dealt withal."* A faithful eldership, while it abridges nothing of the just liberties of either pastor or people, is an invaluable blessing to them both and to the Church at large.

For this system, therefore, in view of the principles thus exhibited, we claim a large-hearted and scriptural catholicity; a jealous regard for the rights and principles of its membership, its ministers, and its churches, with the most ample provision for their security and defence; a holy jealousy, also, for the purity in faith and manners, the piety and the power, of the pulpit; with the most effective arrangements for prompt and energetic action on the part of the individual church, and for the utmost combination of the energies of the whole denomination, in the work of publishing the gospel to every creature.

As a system of church order, our ecclesiastical polity is all that we can desire. It is the growth of ages. It is the fruit of a world's experience. Its love for the past blinds it not to the riper fruits of a coming era. Whatever of wisdom can be gained in the future, it may easily and orderly appropriate. Its frame-work is elastic. It provides a safe and ready mode for the incorporation of new forms, and the modifying of the old, at the will of the people. It adapts itself to

* "The Panoplist," x. 324.

every phase of society. It is at home everywhere. It works to a charm in the single church, nor less admirably in the widest expansion of the confederacy of churches. It is fitted peculiarly for the indefinite extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. It may co-operate with other organizations, or pursue the work by itself. It is a voluntary combination of churches, presbyteries, and synods, pledged at God's altar to the high and holy work of promoting the cause of Christ as God shall give them opportunity. It needs no other organism for the work of bringing forward and sustaining its candidates for the ministry, of furnishing the churches with a godly literature, of exploring the waste places, planting new churches and sustaining them in our own land, and, in a word, of instituting and supporting missions wherever man is found, in Christian and in heathen lands. It is a world-converting institution. It needs but the breath from heaven, the living soul, the Spirit's mighty impulses, the heart, the will, to make it all that any system can be.

Pure and scriptural in her faith, regenerate in her membership, served at her altars with a learned and godly ministry, simple in her worship, strict and equal in her discipline, efficient in her government, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," is the Church of our love, the habitation of our God.

THE END.

No. 302.

SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE:

A DUTY AND A PRIVILEGE.

To honor the Lord with our substance has been a Christian duty and an act of Christian worship in all ages and dispensations of the Church. The offerings unto God, in the patriarchal period, were acts of devotion and thanksgiving, as well as sacrifice. The costly gifts for the building of the temple, and the temple service, with the rendering of tithes for the support of the priesthood and the public worship of God, systematically bestowed, mark the happiest period in the history of the Jews, the most prosperous in Church and State.

In the sayings of our Lord and the writings of the apostles, the importance attached to *almsgiving*, for the purposes of aiding the poor and extending the gospel, and the frequency and plainness with which it was urged, and the prominence given to it as a sacred duty, an act of Christian principle, an object of deliberation, leave us no room to doubt that, in all the history of the Church, till the millennium at least, one of the leading evidences of true godliness is a *benevolent* disposition, a systematic and wise beneficence for the kingdom of the Redeemer.

In the Jewish dispensation, the prophets uttered the bitterest imprecations against those who, through carelessness or avarice, withheld the appointed tithes and offerings;

showing that it was the reason why the Lord, on his part, had withheld both spiritual and material prosperity. If this were so in a dispensation when the Church was confined to a single nation, how much more in the Christian dispensation, in which "the field is the world," and the duty of the Church is to "preach the gospel to every creature"! In the present dispensation, all religious privileges have been enlarged; and it is to be expected that all the graces of the Spirit, not excepting the grace of beneficence, will abound and develop themselves in proportion to the greatness of the field of their operations.

A disposition to do good is an essential element of true piety; but how this disposition shall manifest itself, what forms our beneficence shall assume, are questions so difficult to answer, and the spirit of avarice is so strong, that nothing is more palpable to observation than that the beneficence of the Church does not fairly represent her ability, or, for want of a proper education, her piety. Great numbers in the Church give nothing systematically, or intelligently, or deliberately. The most that is given to the various causes of benevolence is given by a few. Systematic beneficence, applied to churches, implies the general consent and co-operation of all, as well as deliberate and certain beneficence on the part of the few, both of which combined ought to correspond to their duty and their capacity for well-doing. What is wanted is, not larger gifts, but more givers.

THREE QUESTIONS.

In order to secure systematic beneficence in the Church, three questions need to be answered:—

I. What objects are worthy of our confidence? and, especially, by what rule shall the order of their importance be determined?

II. What are the best modes of securing contributions?

III. How shall we best inspire and develop the spirit of beneficence in the whole Church?

God has already indicated a line of beneficence which it is always safe to follow. *The preaching of the gospel and the establishment and ordinances of the Christian Church are always worthy of confidence and support;* for they are divine methods of saving the world. God has determined by the "foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;" and he has made it the duty of the Church to extend its own institutions, and to "preach the gospel to every creature." Whatever secures the extension of the Church and the preaching of the gospel in its purity, is, so far forth, always worthy of confidence, and commends itself to the benevolence of all Christians. The work of missions, at home and abroad, is almost wholly such a work. The more of preaching and the less of every thing else there is connected with any enterprise, the more worthy of confidence it is.

That which brings the gospel to bear on the greatest number is worthy of confidence in like proportion.

Organizations whose object is to preach the gospel to the outcast, to the poor, to sailors, to Jews, to foreigners, to slaves, or to papists, should not stand so high in the regards of Christian men as those that preach the gospel to all men, and seek, from the largest number, to win to Christ, indiscriminately, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free.

Whatever promotes the growth of the Church is, to that extent, commendable and praiseworthy.

The Church is ordained of God; and whatever gives it power, and promotes the edification of his people, is worthy of a generous support. Every well-directed effort to furnish a competent ministry, to endow the needed institutions

of learning, to build houses of worship, and to furnish a Christian literature, is entitled to confidence. Whatever brings people into contact with the Church, or has an organic or vital connection with it, or which is the natural development of its life, is entitled to far more confidence than any thing, whatever its expenditures or zealous endeavors, that does not acknowledge, honor, magnify, and build up the Church. Perhaps the objects that have been commended to our sympathy have been too numerous: that some of them have been unworthy of our confidence, needs no proof. Impostors and enthusiasts often delude and over-persuade the benevolent, who subsequently find that what they gave at the solicitations of such men has been thrown away. Having been cheated once, they are afraid of being cheated again, and as a consequence their generous impulses are repressed and the fountains of their benevolence dried up. But if Christians will keep constantly before them, amidst all applications for aid, the importance of preaching the gospel to the greatest number possible, of extending the Church to the greatest degree possible, it will aid them greatly in determining the relative importance of the objects which demand their confidence and support. Other causes may demand occasional, perhaps considerable, contributions; but trying every cause by these tests, they will seldom mistake.

MODE OF SECURING CONTRIBUTIONS.

The best mode of securing contributions is not necessarily that which secures, in every instance, the largest contributions, *but that which gives play to the grace of beneficence in the greatest number, and which secures cheerfulness and intelligent satisfaction in the act of the donors.* In the long run, this method will also be found to secure the largest contributions.

The Roman Catholic population in this country is mainly made up of the poorer classes. But their contributions are very large, because all the people are expected to give. Their beneficence is thoroughly systematic. Heads of families and little children, domestics, male and female, have urged upon their attention whatever causes of benevolence, local or general, their Church authorities recommend. And the aggregate of their collections is very large.

The Methodist Episcopal Church is also represented as giving largely, though the wealth under its control is much less than in some other Churches. And, in whatever denomination or Church the effort has been made to bring the causes of benevolence before all the members of the congregation, the sum total has been surprisingly large.

The work of beneficence which is worthy of being kept before the Church year after year, is worthy of being brought home to the attention of every person connected with our congregations. Whatever is worthy of being done is worthy of being well done. No presentation from the pulpit, on any one Sabbath of the year, can reach all the people. Let such a presentation be made, commending the cause, if need be, to the heart and the judgment, but let it be followed by a visitation of the entire congregation, to secure their free-will offerings to the cause. This work may properly be committed to the deacons of the church; but the elders and private members, male and female, will cheerfully lend their assistance.

OBJECTION ANSWERED.

If it be objected that such a task becomes a burden and falls by its own weight, it may be replied, *it need not so be.* Impress on the people of God the sacredness and import-

ance of every cause that is commended to their benevolence, and they will give liberally and cheerfully, and the labor of soliciting contributions will be no longer a task. Many congregations have from nine to twelve objects of stated benevolence in a year. If this number seems burdensome and the people have formed the habit of treating them all distrustfully or dismissing them with a mere pittance, the remedy is not to be found in reducing the number of applications, so much as it is in excluding such as are doubtful in their usefulness.

It is not the *frequency* of collections that makes them burdensome, so much as it is the *multiplicity of objects* that come before the Churches, many of which are too nearly alike. Our benevolent labors are too much subdivided, and Christians become perplexed and then disgusted with appeals in behalf of three or four agencies, during a year, which are essentially one. They will more readily give twelve contributions to one cause which they understand and prize, than to three or four enterprises of doubtful utility, or that accomplish only what one could better accomplish alone.

STATED TIMES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS.

Let there be a specified time, if possible, some given month, for every cause. Let the cause be eminently worthy. Carefully exclude all that are doubtful; frown upon all that are in irresponsible hands. Let the people be instructed that no application shall be made through the Church that the proper authorities thereof do not heartily endorse; and teach them to reserve their largest, purely religious charities for only such; and they will soon learn that nothing comes before them which is not worthy to arrest their attention, excite their Christian sensibilities, and be the

recipient of their bounty. Let them see that nothing comes before them for petty contributions, or to be thrust aside without thought; and every such cause will grow in importance and dignity in their apprehension, and become hallowed in their hearts.

If then it be impracticable to visit the whole congregation and take their contributions, let previous notice be given when the collection will be taken in the house of God; at that time let the cause be fully endorsed by the pastor of the church. Let the pews be provided with cards, on which any who may not be prepared to make their contribution that day may write their names, specify the sums that they will give, and the time when it will be convenient to pay them.

A cause that is not worthy of such notice or care cannot fail to become despicable in the eyes of the people, however worthy it may be. To thrust any high and noble object of Christian benevolence out of the sanctuary, or let it come in with no fair recognition, is to offer an insult to God, and wound the Saviour in the house of his friends.

It has often been suggested that particular Sabbaths be designated for simultaneous collections for given causes throughout all the churches in our connection, that almsgiving and supplication touching that cause may be in concert. But such a course seems impracticable. The Assembly has recommended that collections in all the churches be taken up for the cause of Ministerial Education, either the Sabbath before or the Sabbath after the Concert of Prayer for Colleges and other Institutions of Learning. And yet in very many instances it is found impossible to observe the recommendation. Let every church, as far as possible, designate for itself given months or specified Sabbaths in the year, for the leading objects of beneficence; and to that extent it becomes systematic, and

secures every advantage that we could obtain by any attempted concert of action throughout the whole Church.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RIGHT SPIRIT.

How shall we inspire and develop the spirit of beneficence in the whole Church?

This is the great task to be performed, and it will be found, and hence ought to be distinctly stated, that *the chief responsibility touching the development of this, as of any other grace, must rest on the ministers of Christ.*

Many Christians seem to think that the demand for pecuniary contributions is something new, accidental, and unnecessary. They give nothing except by temporary impulse, even to those agencies which bear most directly on the world's conversion. Avarice, worldliness, ignorance, and unbelief, the common enemies of piety, array themselves against the exercise of Christian benevolence.

Ministers of the gospel, also, are very apt to endeavor to awaken the spirit of benevolence in the breasts of their hearers only at such times as they call on them for their contributions. This is as if a general should never exercise his troops except in the sight of the enemy, or on the day of battle; or as if a runner should be put in training only on the day set apart for the race.

In all the public prayers and public instructions, not only on special occasions and at monthly concerts of prayer, but at all times, the existence and spirit of Christian beneficence should be recognized by the ministers of Christ. Let the necessity for it be taken for granted, and let fervent and persevering prayer be made for its larger development. Let it appear that beneficence is piety; that the systematic observance of religious duties involves the systematic exercise of this grace also; that it will not grow of itself, but

needs careful and wise culture; that God has intentionally furnished the opportunity for the full play and development of every Christian grace, on which their own happiness and usefulness depend; and that to inspire and develop in themselves the spirit of beneficence, is to inspire true godliness and the spirit of devotion; and the people of God will soon attain to pleasing convictions of the importance and blessedness of doing good with their money, as well as by other forms of the Christian life, godly conversation, prayer, praise, and preaching of the word. Then, when their contributions are called for, their religious education and attainments will have prepared them to do their whole duty with cheerfulness and inward satisfaction.

INFORMATION NEEDED.

Pastors should not only teach their people the duty and blessedness of Christian beneficence, *but should seek to make them intelligent as to all the objects which are most likely to come before them.* The churches which give most generally and most generously are those in which pastors make their people acquainted with certain causes of benevolence, which they are also taught to recognize as a part of their own organization,—the development of their Church life,—as instrumentalities that belong to them, and through which they discharge their duties to a fallen world. Let them understand where their money goes; let them understand it minutely. Let pastors inform, and they can hardly fail to interest, the people. There may be some zeal without knowledge, but zeal with knowledge is more and better.

Before such a people, no pastor need hesitate, or dread to present any worthy cause of benevolence. No stranger, no accredited agent for any organization, need expect to obtain from them what their pastor can obtain. To whose

appeals will the rich, who have much to give, or the poor, who have but little, and wish to have it expended judiciously, respond so freely as to their spiritual guide, whom they have learned to respect and love?

DUTY OF PASTORS AND ELDERS.

Pastors and Elders should aim to secure Systematic Beneficence. Beneficence will not become systematic of itself. It must be made systematic. System implies deliberation, and a plan,—fixed times of contribution, and fixed sums, or at fixed rates.

The apostle said to the Corinthians, "On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store according as God hath prospered him." Here was a *plan* of systematic beneficence. Here was the call for deliberation, and for the frequent discharge of a sacred duty; and here was the *rule* to measure the amount of their contributions, viz., *according as God had prospered them.* Was there ever a better rule, or a better system of beneficence? Why not adopt it?

DUTY OF PRIVATE CHRISTIANS.

Let Christians deliberately determine what portion of their income they will devote to the Lord. Let them fix a rate, and solemnly abide by it. Let it be a fixed rate, either for a given year, or for life; or let it be a given rate till their property shall amount to a certain sum, and after that time some higher rate.

EXAMPLES WANTED.

Let pastors, if possible, secure eminent examples of beneficence in their congregations. Some congregations

give very much more than others of equal ability, because the former have been favored with leading men of great liberality. Men are influenced by example. If they see one of their brethren, whose ability to give they know to be no greater than their own, actually contributing far more than they thought to do, they see another man's estimate of their own ability. And when they have once been induced to give liberally, and see that they are none the poorer for it, they can the more readily be induced to repeat the experiment. By this process, at length a whole congregation can be brought to greatly-increased liberality.

Let the pastor, therefore, select from his congregation those most likely to respond to his appeals, especially among his young men, and, by personal private conversation, endeavor to secure the habit of liberal beneficence. If the disposition *to give* be a Christian grace,—a gift of the Spirit,—why should it not be an object of culture by private pastoral labor, as well as any other Christian grace?

Are not pastors accustomed to seek out all those in their congregations whom they think capable of engaging in public social prayer to the edification of the whole church? Is not a church eminent for benevolence as praiseworthy as one eminent for prayer? If the spirit of beneficence, like the spirit of prayer, be both a gift from God and a gift attained by culture and pastoral care, why may not the faithful pastor have a benevolent as well as a prayerful church? And as the Church has multiplied tenfold in the last fifty years her members capable of profitable public prayer,—and to a great extent through the labors of the ministry,—why may not the beneficence of the Church be multiplied tenfold the next fifty years in like manner?

THE BEST WAY.

Finally, "*the best way to do any thing is to do it!*" No plan will work itself. There is no mode that is of any value unless it be pervaded by the right spirit. Let the Church set about the work of beneficence with earnestness, and the zeal which the wants of the Church demand, and the modes will soon be devised. Let it become pervaded with an intense desire for the salvation of sinners and the conversion of the world, and they would not neglect their duty for want of a plan of beneficence: their benevolence would create a plan. We are anxious to find the best mode of securing enlarged benevolence in the Church; but we are sure that the lack of contributions in our churches springs more from want of a desire to do good with their substance, than from any lack of knowledge as to the proper modes of doing it, or of appropriate channels through which to operate on their fellow-men. If no general plan be feasible, let every church be a law unto itself, for the work is great: "the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

If all Christians will learn to practise systematic beneficence, if they will bring their tithes into the storehouse, there would no longer be any lack in the treasury of the Lord. There is money enough in the hands of Christians to prosecute with vigor every good work. More givers, more systematic givers, who acknowledge themselves the Lord's stewards, would furnish the Church abundant means for all her missionary labors in all parts of the world.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

"Keep silence, all created things,
And wait your Maker's nod;
My soul stands trembling while she sings
The honors of her God.
Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on his firm decree:
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be."

THERE can be no question of higher importance to man than that which relates to the character of God We can have no true knowledge of ourselves without a knowledge of Him with whom emphatically "we have to do." If we would answer the inquiry, "What is man?" we must first answer the inquiry, "What is God?" Never shall we realize our own insignificance until we form just conceptions of the divine majesty. Nor is it possible to exercise any right affections towards a being of whose character we are ignorant. To love God, we must know him; to obey him, we must rightly apprehend the relation which he sustains to us, and the duties growing out of that relation. Our views of religious truth, in general, will be formed by the views we entertain of God. "Tell me," says a distinguished writer, "what you believe about God, and I will tell you what you believe on every fundamental subject of theology."

Let us, then, turn our thoughts to a contemplation of the *sovereignty of God.*

A *sovereign* is a supreme ruler, one who possesses the highest authority without control. By the sovereignty of God we understand his power and right to act according to his will or pleasure, independently of the control of any of his creatures.

We need not object to the *term* because it may not be found in the Bible; for on the same ground might we object to numerous theological terms which we find convenient and appropriate to express the thoughts we wish to communicate.

The great fact that God is a sovereign, that he is the supreme Governor of the universe, and that he disposes of all beings and all events as seemeth him good, is taught in the Scriptures most clearly and forcibly. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," &c. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" "Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." "The Lord hath made all things for himself." "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." "He giveth not account of any of his matters." "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"

It would be needless to multiply passages. No language could more fully express God's absolute supremacy, his perfect right, and his unlimited power

to manage the affairs of the universe in his own way and to his own glory.

The sovereignty of God is founded on his very *existence.* You cannot separate the two. If there is a God, self-existent, eternal, independent, and infinite in all his perfections, then must he have a perfect right to do whatever he may see to be wisest and best. Whom shall he consult in his affairs? What creature is capable of dictating to him what ought to be done? Who, like him, knows the end from the beginning? There can be but one ruler of the universe. Supreme power must be lodged in the hands of God, or it can be lodged nowhere. The very archangels are unworthy to be consulted as to what God shall do. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways.

He who is the Creator of the universe must also be its Lord or Sovereign. He has a right to do what he will with his own, and no one may say unto him, "What doest thou?"

But we come now to notice some illustrations or proofs of God's sovereignty.

1. We refer, in the *first place, to the work of creation.* In the *very act* of creation we have a manifestation of divine sovereignty. Whether the universe should be called into existence, was a question which the divine mind alone could solve. As there was no being with whom God could consult, it remained with him to say whether his power should be exerted in giving birth to creation, or not. "Where wast thou," he inquires, "when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?"

And, then, as to the *period* when God should call the universe into being: who could decide that question but he? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Creation must have had a *beginning*. Place this work as far back as you please, still there must have been a time when the created universe had no existence. God alone is eternal. Every thing else has derived its being from him; and it depended on his will alone when the worlds should be made, and what purposes they should subserve.

And so also it was for him to decide *what to create*, —how many worlds, and of what form and structure; what kind of beings, rational or irrational; what kind of matter, animate or inanimate. In this vast creation we discover an almost endless *variety*. No two worlds appear to be exactly alike. A marked difference there may be, not only in their dimensions and their revolutions, but also in their organization and population. God has made both angels and men, and among each a manifest diversity in mind and position. Among the former there are "principalities and powers," various ranks and orders, each fulfilling the great designs of infinite wisdom. To one man God has given an intellect of surpassing vigor; to another, one comparatively feeble. He might have made them all equal; but he has made as discernible a difference in the structure of their minds as he has in their looks and features. He has placed one planet near the sun, and another remote. One part of our globe is bound in perpetual ice; another is clothed in perpetual verdure. To the earth he has given one moon; to Jupiter, four; to Herschel, six; to Saturn, seven.

All this variety depended on the will of God alone. He has created just such a universe as suited his own

purpose. "For thy pleasure all things are and were created."

2. The *providence of God* affords us another illustration of his sovereignty. That providence, we are assured, extends to all things, small as well as great. Not a sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our heavenly Father. "Of him, through him, and to him are all things."

Who but God appointed the *time and place of our birth and the bounds of our habitation?* It is he who has "made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth," and "hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." It is not by our own choice, not by chance, that we live in this land, so highly distinguished for its civil and religious privileges, while so many nations are oppressed by the rod of tyranny or are groping their way in the midst of moral darkness.

God, too, has directed *all the circumstances of our life*,—our joys and our sorrows, our successes and our failures, our connections and our pursuits, our times of health and of sickness, our days of light and of darkness. He chooses our inheritance for us. "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps."

On one man he confers wealth, another he afflicts with poverty; one he favors with unimpaired health, another he visits with pining sickness. To one he has given a constitution vigorous and firm, to another one feeble and frail. One has an almost uninterrupted flow of spirits; another is subject to painful depressions. One occupies a palace; another, a hovel. One he invests with extensive power and dominion, another is made not to rule, but to serve. "Pro-

motion cometh not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God setteth up one and casteth down another."

And as he controls the circumstances of our birth and our life, so does he also the *time and manner of our death.* "All our days are determined by him; the number of our months are with him: he has appointed our bounds that we cannot pass." We live only by his permission; we die at his command. Some he removes in infancy, some in childhood, some in youth, some in the maturity of life, some in advanced age. Some die by one disease, some by another. Some die in apparent tranquillity, others in great pain and suffering. Some are cut off in the midst of extensive usefulness, when it would seem they could not be spared; the lives of others are prolonged notwithstanding their unfruitfulness and rebellion. Why is this? God has not revealed to us the reasons. "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

The same sovereignty is manifested in God's dealings with *nations* as marks his treatment of individuals. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." Nations rise and fall, appear and disappear, at his order. They exist only by his permission; and, when he has accomplished his purpose respecting them, they are swept away from the earth, to be followed, in turn, by others, as the instruments of God's pleasure.

3. We come now to the work of *Redemption.* This work, like that of creation, must have originated solely with God. It was for him to determine whether *any* fallen beings should be redeemed, or all

should be left to their helpless ruin. If a Saviour is provided for any, the gift must be of grace, free, unmerited,—a gift that may be granted or withheld as infinite wisdom may dictate.

And, then, as to the question, *who shall be redeemed?* that was also a matter which God had a perfect right to settle. The condition of both fallen angels and fallen men was before him; and while in his adorable sovereignty he passed by the former, he came to the rescue of our revolted race. The Son of God took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Why this distinction? Who can solve the problem? Why were a superior order of beings left to reap the fruit of their apostasy, while men—worms of the dust—are raised from their deep degradation to thrones of unfading glory? God undoubtedly had reasons for this selection; but as yet they are utterly unknown to us.

But *how* is man to be redeemed? Shall it be by a mere act of power or exercise of mercy, or by an adequate price? If a ransom is requisite, who will pay down that ransom? Who will meet the demands of the violated law? Who will become a mediator between God and man? Who will assume the stupendous task of removing the mountain-load of guilt resting upon our race, and of reinstating us in the forfeited favor and friendship of Heaven? Angels stand in mute suspense. Not one of them dare suggest the expedient by which the divine perfections may be honored and a rebel world may be redeemed. It was for God to provide a substitute,—a victim on whom might be laid the iniquities of us all, and who was fully competent to recover these ruined natures to holiness and happiness.

And He who has provided salvation for sinful man

has also appointed the *terms* on which that salvation may be secured,—not our imperfect obedience, but simple *faith* in the great propitiation; "for to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." Every thing pertaining to the economy of human redemption has been ordered and arranged by him,—the holy Sabbath, the Christian ministry, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the organization of the Church, and the various influences by which men are brought to the knowledge of the truth and introduced into the kingdom of God.

And why is it that *some nations are favored with such superior religious advantages to others?* Why are such large portions of our globe enveloped in the darkness of paganism, of error and superstition, while upon us are poured the full beams of the Sun of righteousness? We know that God may justly suffer those to be given up to their delusions who have cast off their allegiance to him; we know, too, that there has been a most criminal neglect of duty on the part of the Church in her efforts to disseminate the glorious gospel. Still, with all this admission of human guilt we must connect the exercise of divine sovereignty. Whatever guilt and unworthiness may be attached to man, God is moving forward in the accomplishment of his own purposes and the promotion of his own glory. If he chooses to give the gospel to one nation and leave another without it, who can charge him with injustice? He once selected the Jewish nation from all others as his peculiar people; and he has a perfect right now to make similar distinctions.

How wonderfully does God evince his sovereignty

in *selecting the subjects of his grace!* "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The provisions of the gospel are, indeed, made for all, and are to be tendered to all. The terms on which they are offered are most reasonable, and nothing can hinder men from complying with them but their own perverseness. The kind invitation is given, "Come, for all things are now ready;" but all with one consent begin to make excuse. Why, then, do any obey the gospel call? Why is one saved and not another? Who has made us to differ from others, or what have we that we have not received? "By the grace of God I am what I am." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." Man's destruction is all of himself; man's salvation is all of God. "Many are called, but few are chosen." Why this choice? Certainly it is not founded on any superior goodness or merit; for "we are all by nature the children of wrath, even as others." It is no uncommon thing for God to make those the subjects of his renewing and pardoning grace who to human view would be least likely to become such. The chief of sinners are brought into his kingdom, while the moral and virtuous still refuse its blessings. "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first." "One shall be taken, and the other left." The rich, the learned, the wise, not unfrequently reject the offer of salvation, while the poor, the ignorant, the degraded, accept it with thankfulness. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things

from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The dealings of God *with his Church* are directly the reverse of what we might suppose they would be. Instead of giving her at once the victory, she has been subject to a most protracted and trying warfare. Instead of favoring her with uninterrupted prosperity, she has had her seasons of apparent repulse and defeat. The cause of truth has at times seemed ready to perish, the man of sin has been allowed a long and almost universal reign, and the witnesses of Jesus have been called to prophesy in sackcloth and ashes; and, yet, what appears to us as evil, and what is really such in itself, God, in his sovereignty, is overruling for good. He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains.

The same sovereignty does he exercise in his dealings with his people as *individuals*. Instead of giving them at once the crown, they must first endure the cross. Their course is often a checkered one. They have their alternate seasons of elevation and depression,—of triumph and of defeat. He is continually leading them by a way they know not,—using his own means for their moral discipline, and for the accomplishment of his gracious design in their final glorification.

Such is God's sovereignty, and such are some of its manifestations. No doctrine, perhaps, has awakened more hostility in men than this; and yet none is more clearly and fully established. Many of the objections, it may be conceded, are founded entirely on misapprehension. These need only to be removed

and the doctrine must at once appear replete with glory and encouragement.

The sovereignty of God is controlled by *infinite wisdom*. God never acts from mere impulse or caprice, but is always influenced by the highest and best motives. He has *reasons*, *good* reasons, for all that he does. These, indeed, may be concealed from man; for his paths are "in the sea, and his footsteps in the mighty waters,"—past finding out. "Verily, thou 'art a God that hidest thyself." But if we cannot assign the reasons of his conduct, is that any proof that he has none? Shall we charge God with folly because he is beyond our comprehension? Let us learn to trust in him, even though he slay us,—assured that what we know not now we may know hereafter, and that he will fully vindicate himself in the eyes of the intelligent universe.

It is in reference to the exercise of God's sovereignty in the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles that the apostle breaks forth in the adoring exclamation, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

God ever acts on *fixed* principles,—principles founded on the dictates of his own wisdom. He has appointed laws for the government both of the physical and the moral universe; and, though we cannot always prescribe the precise mode of his operation, he has formed such a connection between the means and the end—between cause and effect—as to afford the highest incentive and encouragement to human diligence and activity. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either

this or that, or whether both shall be alike good." God may give or withhold as in his sovereign pleasure he sees best; and yet he has declared that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." "I have planted, and Apollos watered; and God gave the increase." The sovereignty of God ought never to be urged as a plea for neglected duty. It never interferes either with human freedom or accountability. God will help those who strive to help themselves. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Nor should we ever associate with the sovereignty of God the idea of *injustice*, of *oppression*, or of *tyranny*. We must be careful that we do not make God, in this respect, such an one as ourselves. Supreme power lodged in the hand of man is always liable to perversion and abuse. It is a most dangerous weapon for any human being to wield. Not so, however, with God. His power is always under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness. His government is a *perfect* government. None will ever "perish, being innocent." "The curse causeless shall not come" upon a single individual. Not a single pang shall we ever suffer unless it be merited. The Judge of all the earth will do right. "Clouds and darkness are round about him;" but "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." While there will be a most marvellous display of grace in the eternal redemption of the saints, there will be an equally marvellous display of justice in the final perdition of the impenitent. Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.

The sovereignty of God is a *benevolent sovereignty*. Whatever he does appears "*good* in his sight;" and

could we see things as they are seen by him, we should acknowledge that "he hath done all things well." If there is evil in the universe, we may be sure he will overrule it for good. In all his works he contemplates the highest and best interests of his moral empire. If the chastisements which, at times, he inflicts on his own people seem severe, no doubt they are necessary, and in the end will prove to them the richest blessing. Leave, then, to his sovereign sway to choose and to command. Let him choose your inheritance for you, mark out for you your course through life, and fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his will.

"His providence unfolds his book
And makes his counsels shine;
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,
Fulfils some deep design.
My God! I would not long to see
My fate with curious eyes,
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes may rise."

The great duty growing out of this doctrine is *submission*,—cordial and unqualified submission. "Be still, and know that I am God." "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth: because thou didst it."

Here is the true test of piety,—acquiescence in the will of God,—a cordial approbation of the divine government and dispensation. To all holy beings it is a source of unspeakable satisfaction and joy that there is upon the throne of the universe a being infinitely wise, good, just, and powerful. "The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice." The truly loyal subjects of God's government do not fear to trust him They feel that under such a government they

are secure; and with confidence they commit their interests into his hands, believing that all things shall work for their ultimate good.

But how different are the feelings of the rebellious and unsubdued heart! "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God." What objections are continually urged against the dealings of God!—what complaints are heard against his law, his gospel, his purposes, his dispensations of grace! Men are ever afraid that God will do wrong. They would teach the Almighty wisdom; and, were it in their power, they would snatch the sceptre of dominion from his hand.

And why this hostility to God's sovereign rule? Who is so fit to govern the universe as he? What injustice can you find in his conduct? What improvement can you suggest in his plans? "Are not my ways equal, and your ways unequal?" "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Can you change his purposes? Can you abate his demands? Can you abrogate his law? Can you overturn his throne? "Woe to him that striveth with his Maker." Oh, how utterly vain and fruitless is this warfare with omnipotence, how certain the defeat and ruin of all who raise their puny arms of opposition to the Most High, and how resplendent the manifestation of his justice in the subjugation and perdition of those who are at war with his throne, and who refuse the tender of pardon so freely made through the blood of a Mediator!

"Tremble, ye sinners, and submit;
Throw down your arms before his throne;
Bend your heads low beneath his feet,
Or his strong hand will crush you down."

THE

PERSON OF CHRIST.

"What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?"—Matt. xxii. 42.

"WHAT think ye of Mohammed?" would be a grave question for us; not merely because of the loftiness of Mohammed's claim to be a true prophet of God, sent into the world with a new economy to supersede Christianity, as Christianity had superseded Judaism, but also because for more than twelve centuries this claim has been so widely allowed, and is still allowed by more than a hundred millions of human souls. But our text propounds a far graver inquiry than this about Mohammed. "What think ye of Christ?" is a question from the lips of one who claims to be much more than a prophet of God, a question which began to be answered more than eighteen centuries ago, is now asked and answered by more millions of men than ever before, and is destined eventually to be asked and answered by all mankind.

It was a new question when put to the Pharisees by our Lord himself on the Wednesday before he suffered. It is an old question now. Were it new, we should have only the Scriptures, from which to answer it. As it is, the Scriptures are not our only oracle. They stand supreme, it is true, and must have

both the first word and the last; but they do not stand alone. Christendom itself, in the aggregate of its successive generations, is another, incarnate Scripture, perpetually expounding the written word. What then, we may well inquire, has been the response of Christendom, for these eighteen hundred years, to the challenge of our text? With the Bible in its hands, what has Christendom had to say of Christ?

To the question, "What think ye of Christ?" it will be found that only four answers can possibly be given, only one of which can possibly be right. How these four answers have all been given, and what reception they have met with, let us now proceed to consider. The voice of the Christian Church shall thus be heard, interpreting the Christian Scriptures.

I. In the first place, it has been said that Christ is only a man.

On this theory he had of course no existence before he was born of Mary. That birth may or may not have been miraculous. But if miraculous, so also was the birth of Isaac, and the birth of John the Baptist, in a sense miraculous. In either case, whether the son of Joseph and Mary, or the son only of Mary, he was merely a man, born to grow, and born to die. It may be conceded that he was a faultless man; but Adam also was faultless before he fell, and Christ accordingly did but reproduce the primal pattern. As our second Adam, his distinction, and his only distinction, is that he held out to the end in his obedience, maintaining for three and thirty years that lofty estate which the first Adam so quickly lost. He was indeed a prophet, but only a prophet, differing in no essential particular

from the goodly fellowship of the Hebrew prophets who had gone before him. And though he spake as never man had spoken before, he yet spake only as a man inspired of God to speak; superior to Isaiah and Ezekiel only as they were superior to Amos and Joel. It is true, he wrought miracles, changing water into wine, feeding hundreds of men from a single loaf, walking upon the waves, healing the sick, and waking the dead. But Moses also wrought miracles, smiting Egypt with plagues, laying open the Red Sea from shore to shore, calling down bread from the sky, and bringing water from a rock. If there was a widow of Nain, there had been also a widow of Zarephath, whose dead son came back at the call of Elijah. Nay, the very bones of Elisha quickened the corpse which touched them in the place of burial. Nature was indeed convulsed by the dying agonies of Christ, the sky darkened, the earth quaked, and graves opened; but this was no more than befitted such a martyrdom, laying the foundations of such an empire. Christ, it is true, was raised again from the dead; but Enoch and Elijah had gone up excused from dying. And though after forty days this man of Nazareth also went up to heaven, there to be seen of dying saints, and thence to rule and guide his growing Church, for him, as for us, a day is appointed when he must resign his office, and give an account of his stewardship, that God may be all in all.

That Christ was thus only a man, seemed palpable enough to his neighbors in Nazareth. His words and his works, it is true, astonished them, but appear to have awakened no suspicion of Divinity. They only asked: "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his

mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" Even had he been looked upon as the expected Messiah, there would still have been no thought of worship; for it is a well-known fact, that the great bulk of the Hebrew people were then expecting only a human Messiah. It may be said, that with the forty-fifth Psalm, and the ninth chapter of Isaiah, and the fifth chapter of Micah before them, the Hebrew people ought to have been looking for a Divine Messiah. But the historic fact remains, that they were not looking for such a Messiah. The Simeons and the Annas were not numerous in Palestine. As to Jesus of Nazareth,—a plain carpenter in an obscure, rude, and partly Gentile village, working daily at his trade, could not easily be thought of as anything more than a plain carpenter.

Hence these Ebionites of the early centuries, downright humanitarians, disciples, and some of them apparently devout disciples of the Nazarene; and yet deriving his descent as much from Joseph as from Mary. It would be rash to deny or doubt their honesty. At all events they attempted no disguise or concealment of their opinions. They stood forth boldly in the face of Christendom, flying the banner on whose folds they had inscribed: *Christ is only a man.* Who, then, were these Ebionites? and how fared it with them and their banner? I reply, they were a Jewish Christian sect, and small at that, embracing but a fraction of their converted countrymen, were seldom joined by any Gentiles, and made no great stir anywhere outside of Palestine. And what is more, they were promptly

denounced as heretics, and by the fifth century had wholly vanished out of history. Outside of Palestine, amongst the Gentiles, in Byzantium and Rome, the kindred tenets of Theodotus, Artemon, and others, who likewise denied the divinity of Christ, underwent an equally decisive condemnation. That heroic Church, which for three hundred years was in such well nigh constant risk of martyrdom for Christ, could not endure to hear it said that Christ was only a man. Of learned biblical criticism, there was as yet but little. Of philosophic grasp and acumen, there was as yet but little. Athanasius had not yet come. But the Bible could not be misunderstood by simple-minded men, honestly, reading it. A greater than Solomon, it was plain, must have entranced the vision of the Psalmist when he sang: "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." It was not of Hezekiah, but of Christ, that the prophet was felt to be speaking when he said: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Still more specific was the announcement of another prophet: "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Here in the Old Testament was the doctrine of an eternal generation. Jesus was not at all the son of Joseph; and he was infinitely more than the son of Mary. So likewise in the New Testament, while Matthew had traced the descent from Abraham, and Luke had traced it from Adam, John shot up like an

eagle beyond the boundaries of time and space. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Our Lord himself had said: "Before Abraham was, I am." And when at last adjured by the High Priest to say whether he was the Christ, and not the Christ only, but also the Son of God, his solemn answer was, "Thou hast said:" an answer which would have been blasphemous had he not been Divine. Such scriptures justified, and more than justified, the dying vision, and the dying prayer, of Stephen. The Church waited not for her philosophers to speak. She spoke herself, throughout all her ranks, spoke promptly, and with the peculiar emphasis of an instinctive and ardent faith. From Rome, from Carthage, from Alexandria, from Antioch, from Ephesus, from every part of Christendom, from every social level, from every grade of intellect and culture, the verdict rang that Christ is more than human.

After this, humanitarianism showed itself in Christendom no more for centuries. Its next appearance was in the train of the Protestant Reformation, three hundred years ago. It was during that great ferment of opinions, when the spirit of a new age was bursting the old bottles, when venerable truth was made so frequently to suffer for being in company with despised and exploded errors, that the old heresy of the Ebionites was revived, and the world's Redeemer was thrust down once more upon the level of mere humanity. This new humanitarianism had its origin in Italy, whence it crossed the Alps into Switzerland, and from there made its way into Poland. Its chief promoters

were Laelius and Faustus Socinus, from whom it took the name of Socinianism. It differed from the old Ebionism in affirming the miraculous conception of Christ; it differed in permitting a sort of worship to be rendered him; but still insisted that he is only a man, and allowed him to be the Son of God in no other sense than that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. Violently suppressed in Poland before the middle of the seventeenth century, Socinianism shortly made its appearance in several other countries of Europe. In England near the close of the eighteenth century it found a champion in Priestley, and was brought by him from England to America. But on neither side of the Atlantic has the system greatly flourished. The quick, sure instinct of Christendom has been fatally against it. It withers all the sooner by reason of its relationship to the earlier, dead heresy of the Ebionites. The Church never repeats a conflict without making it swifter and more decisive than it was before.

By repeated experiments has it now been proved that the religious life either dies out under such doctrine, or else outgrows and discards it. The Church will not be contented with a merely human Christ. In the Babe of Bethlehem it discerns Immanuel; and at the cross it exclaims with the amazed centurion: "Truly, this was the Son of God!" Such from the beginning, with inconsiderable exceptions, has been the confession of renewed and believing souls. Not isolated texts of Scripture, which might possibly be misinterpreted, but the whole genius of the Gospel, and the whole history of its progress, have inspired the conviction that Christ is more than a man. The

common sense of all Christian nations accepts with applause and gratitude these words of Napoleon at St. Helena: "I know men, and I tell you, that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religion the distance of infinity."

II. In the second place, it has been said that Christ is God only.

This also, in one of its forms, was a very ancient opinion; quite as ancient, perhaps, as the opinion we have just considered. It origin is easily discovered.

How Christ was regarded by his fellow-townsmen in Nazareth, we have seen already. And whatever there may have been of culpable blindness on their part, it must nevertheless be confessed, that a great deal was asked of them when they were asked to believe him Divine. The very idea of Divinity, it must be remembered, involves the idea of invisibility. "Thou canst not see my face," said Jehovah to Moses. And John himself, pre-eminently the Evangelist of the incarnation, has declared, that, "No man hath seen God at any time." Now let any one of us attempt to imagine the personal appearance of Christ. Of course, he was a man, a Hebrew man. As such we can have an inward picture of him, as we have of Socrates or Seneca. But what conception can we form of Divine attributes irradiating that human countenance? How shall absolute Divinity be stamped visibly upon the brow, or reveal itself in the light of the eye? Perhaps no artist has ever surpassed Titian

in his famous picture of the "Tribute-money." But has Titian painted anything more than a man? Christ's own disciples, on one occasion, had their eyes so holden that they did not even know him as their Master. It might therefore have been presumed, that they too would have shared largely in the incredulity of the men of Nazareth; coming slowly and with difficulty, if they came at all, to a recognition of his Divinity. And such *was* the process, says Baur, making Ebionism the original belief. But such certainly was not the process. More than six months before the final Passover, in answer to the question: "But whom say *ye* that I am?" Peter's response was: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But however indistinct, in any man's opinion, may have been the impression of Divinity made upon the minds of his disciples during the personal ministry of Christ before he suffered, it is plain that a distinct and strong impression of Divinity was made upon them by his resurrection, and by the peculiar, semi-spiritual intercourse of the forty days that followed; so that when at length the Day of Pentecost came down upon them with its tongues of flame, the Christ they preached was not only the Son of David, but also, in the highest sense conceivable, the Son of God. It is against history to say, that this idea of Divinity was an after-thought; that the beaming halo gathered slowly about the Saviour's head. It was Christ, to whom Peter ascribed the miracle of healing at the Eastern Gate of the Temple. It was to Christ, that the first martyr addressed his dying prayer. It was of Christ as the final judge and the eternal portion of his saints coming with him in the clouds, that Paul

wrote in the earliest of his epistles. I do not deny that the Divinity of Christ shines more and more brightly from book to book till the canon of Scripture was closed. But I do deny in any part of the canon, or in any stage of the process, the presence of an Ebionitic Christ. In the New Testament throughout, if anything is clear, if anything is emphasized, it is not so much the Humanity, as the Divinity, of our blessed Lord. Not that the Humanity is blurred. It stands forth in the record, looking down the centuries, as boldly as Carmel stands upon the coast of Central Palestine, looking forth upon the sea. But it is the Divinity that *dominates*. The Christ of the Apostles, though the son of Mary, was no mere child of time, but that which was from the beginning, from eternity, the first and the last, the root as well as the offspring of David, maker of worlds, ruler of kingdoms, and judge of all.

The same is true of those immediate successors of the Apostles, whose writings are still extant: Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, the unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetus, and Polycarp of Smyrna. These all emphasize the Divinity of Christ; but especially Ignatius of Antioch, in whose burning language of adoration, the Humanity of Christ seems sometimes almost in danger of being utterly consumed. Heedless of scientific discriminations, he carries over to the Divine side, and credits to the Divine nature, what is true only of the human. Our Redeemer's sufferings and blood are repeatedly spoken of as the sufferings and blood of God. None of these Apostolic Fathers either denied, or forgot, or failed to affirm, the Humanity of Christ; they only emphasized his

Divinity, but emphasized it so strongly as to endanger the Humanity.

It required only a little further progress in this direction to bring about a total elimination of the human element. It required but little for the burning bush to be consumed by its enwrapping flame. It required but little to have it said, not merely that Christ is Divine, but that he is Divine and only Divine. That this actually happened, you are well aware. And it happened early; early enough to engage the attention, and elicit the rebuke, of an inspired Apostle. Within the compass of less than two generations after the earthly life of our Lord had closed, there were those who denied his proper Humanity. Probably they were Gentiles, as the first impugners of the *Divinity* had been Jews. And no doubt their whole spiritual development was far nobler than that of the Ebionites. A much deeper experience was indicated by the assertion that Christ is merely Divine, than was indicated by the assertion that Christ is merely human. But this too was stamped with reprobation as an intolerable heresy. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God." So wrote the beloved disciple, as he sat waiting to die at Ephesus. And still again he wrote in another Epistle: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist." And yet the heresy continued, seeking to avert its doom by the loftiness of the reverence it paid to Christ. Docetism was the name given to this con-

ception of the person of our Lord. In the time of Novatian, about the middle of the third century, as we learn from his treatise on the Trinity, Docetism had assumed two forms. In one of its forms, it denied the reality of Christ's body, pronouncing it a mere deceptive appearance. In its other form, it denied only the fleshly nature of the body, declaring it to be ethereal. But in neither of its forms could the Church endure it; and in neither of its forms did it gain much strength or prevalence. Unfortunately for itself, fortunately for the Church, it had lifted its head too early; early enough for the last of the Apostles to write upon its brow the name of Antichrist. It was no mere human judgment, it was inspiration itself which pronounced its doom. And it could never be forgotten, that the Evangelist who most emphasized the Eternal Word was the very Evangelist who best knew Christ as a man, and clung most ardently to his earthly memory.

The next kindred attempt to invalidate the Humanity of Christ, that is to invalidate the Humanity while still affirming the Divinity, was made by one of the most learned, able, and devout men of the fourth century. The Council of Nice in the year 325, after long debate, had pronounced decisively in favour of the essential Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, declaring him to be the only begotten of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. Prominent amongst the most gifted champions of this decision, was Apollinaris the younger, Bishop of Laodicea in Syria. Accepting the Nicene Creed as the basis of his speculations, he undertook to construct a theory of the person of Christ, which should flank

the heresy of Arius, and drive it from the field. Arius had impugned the proper Humanity of Christ by putting the Logos in the place of the rational human soul. But Arius had asserted also a mutability of the will in Christ, which necessitated the inference that the Logos was not Divine. This conclusion Apollinaris of course condemned. The immutability of the will in Christ, and consequently the Divinity of the Logos, he thought might easily be proved. He therefore agreed with Arius in robbing Christ of his rational Humanity, and putting in place of it the Logos. In no other way did he think it possible to vanquish the Arians, and vindicate the Creed of Nice. Hence the new Docetism of the worthy Bishop of Laodicea; a Docetism far in advance of that which had been denounced by the Apostle John. It was clear and strong in affirming the Divinity of our Lord, and wished likewise to be thought mindful of his Humanity. But the Humanity was sadly mutilated. The Christ of Apollinaris was composed of these three elements: The human body, the animal soul, and the Divine Logos. The higher human spirit, the rational human soul, was wanting. Christ was still Divine; to be worshipped as men worship the Father. And he was still human; but not human through and through. He had no proper human soul. What he felt, and thought, and willed, he had felt, and thought, and willed not humanly, but Divinely. The love and intelligence which had kindled in his eye, the firm resolve which had sounded in his voice, were not human, but Divine.

This was, indeed, a lofty conception of Christ; but it contradicted the plainest teachings of the Evangelists

and Apostles. It could not be that Christ had deceived the people of Nazareth, deceived the Sanhedrim, deceived his own disciples, deceived the very mother that bore him, by moving before them in a human body, in which there dwelt no human soul. The blessed Virgin believed herself the mother of a man. Nor did she believe it the less for the wisdom she saw in him as he sat amongst the Doctors in the Temple. Some things she kept hidden in her heart. But amongst them was no bitter sense of mockery in that she had nursed only a human body, without feeding from her loving eyes the tenderness and intelligence of a human soul. Could there have been any doubt, it must have been put to flight by every possible token of a purely human development; for Luke expressly declares that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." John, it is true, speaks of the Word as having been "made flesh." But by *flesh* he meant, as good usage required him to mean, the entire humanity of man; not body alone, nor body and soul alone, but body, soul, and spirit. Nowhere is there the faintest indication that any disciple of Christ ever doubted the reality, or the fulness, of his human nature. Nor was it doubted, so far as we know, by any townsman of Christ, or any contemporary. The Ebionistic heresy itself witnesses for the Humanity. It matters not that there is no express mention of the human *soul* in Christ, till we find it mentioned by Tertullian, not far from the end of the second century. Silence in regard to a point not yet seriously assailed, is no proof of unsoundness on that point. From the beginning, and all along, it had been the belief of the Church, its prevailing belief, that the

Humanity of its Redeemer was a genuine, complete Humanity. This it was that Apollinaris denied. But he denied it in vain. Athanasius and the Gregories, the greatest lights of the age, at once entered the lists against him. Towards him personally there was at first great tenderness and forbearance. Two Synods, one held at Alexandria in 362, and the other at Rome in 374, condemned pointedly his doctrine without mentioning his name. So uniform was the public verdict, and so overwhelming the majority against him, that in 375 he left the communion of his fathers, and set up a sect of his own. At the second general Council, which met at Constantinople in 381, the Church at length unmasked her batteries, and the Apollinarians were expressly denounced as heretics. Nine years after this, Apollinaris died. And by the middle of the subsequent century, the sect which owed its existence to him, was also dead. And his heresy was dead; as dead as the old Jewish Ebionism; as dead as its own kindred Docetism. Nor has it ever, in any great force, revived. From time to time it has re-appeared, but always in the person of here and there a solitary thinker. The great living army of the redeemed, the Church militant on earth, will not believe it is marching to victory under a leader who is God only.

III. In the third place, it has been said that Christ is neither God nor man.

This strange conception of the person of Christ, which dates from the early part of the fourth century, grew up out of the discussions which had long been going on with respect to the Christian Trinity, and

can be fully understood only by first glancing at these discussions.

That God is Three as well as One, had been the faith of the Church from the beginning. Its triune formula of baptism contained that faith, and had witnessed for it everywhere and always. But at first there was no philosophy of the doctrine; only prompt assent to it on the part of every fervent believer. With the conversion of Greek philosophers in the second century speculation began. Turning their backs on the many gods of the heathen, they entered a Church which asserted the Unity of God, and yet was chanting hymns of worship addressed to Christ. They had also been baptized, on the threshold, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. These were the elements, out of which they had to construct their new philosophy of faith. They began of course with Christ, the beginning of all their hopes. Christ certainly is God, for him they worshipped in their psalms and hymns. But God is One, or they would not have abandoned the altars of their fathers. And yet God must somehow be Three, or their baptism had been a senseless ceremony. They and their successors had a double task: First, to clear the idea of the Trinity of the element of time; and secondly, to reconcile the ideas of Trinity and Unity. Only the former of these tasks was attempted by the Greek Apologists of the second century, who inaugurated the grand debate. And they left it for the learned Origen of Alexandria, in the century that followed, to complete their work by teaching the eternal generation. Meanwhile, the other task was on hand, of finding that higher harmony, in which the clashing ideas of Trinity

and Unity are reconciled. That higher harmony was long in being found. There was, indeed, the one sure ground of a common Catholic confession; but those who stood upon it leaned strongly in opposite directions. Some so emphasized the Divine Unity as to imperil the Trinity. Others so emphasized the Trinity as to imperil the Unity. The former tendency reached its logical extreme in Sabellianism, which was at once branded as a heresy. The latter tendency reached its logical extreme in Arianism.

Arius was first heard from in Alexandria, but was by birth probably a Lybian, and had been educated at Antioch, where Paul of Samosata was for nine years Bishop, till deposed for heresy, and where Judaism had long exerted a powerful influence in *ebionizing* the Christian faith. Arius was a tall, spare, pale-faced man; learned, but not profound; agreeable in his manners and exemplary in character, but spiritually thin and cold. Going to Alexandria, he was made a Deacon in the Church there not far from the year 300. While in this office he was excommunicated for siding with the Meletian schism; but was afterwards restored and raised to the rank of Presbyter. Soon after this, Alexander was made Bishop. The Trinitarianism of Alexander was substantially of that type which finally carried the day in Christendom. And Arius was restive under it. But for seven years no breach occurred, till, in 319, as Alexander was holding a conference with his clergy and discoursing on the Unity of the Trinity, Arius interrupted him with the charge of rank Sabellianism. This led to warm debates, in the course of which the peculiar tenets of Arius were fully developed. Christ, he said, is not God. There was a

time when as yet he had no existence. He is a mere creature; not begotten, but made. And yet, on the other hand, he is not man, nor angel; but a creature of God above all other creatures.

Such, in brief, was the Arian conception of Christ. And it was put forward as the best means of reconciling the two sets of passages admitted on all sides to be found standing together in the Scriptures. The passages that point downwards to a lower nature, were explained as teaching that Christ is a creature of God. The passages that point upwards to a higher nature, were explained as teaching that this creature of God is above all other creatures; creating, ruling, redeeming, and judging the world, though only as God's legate. But this awkward theory was looked upon by Alexander, and most of his clergy, as a wretched abortion. Instead of reconciling the passages in question, it was felt to be a contradiction of them all; contradicting on the one side the passages which speak of Christ as Divine, and contradicting on the other side the passages which speak of him as Human. No previous theory had made such havoc of the Scriptures. Ebionism had spared the passages which assert the Humanity of Christ. Docetism had spared the passages which assert the Divinity of Christ. But this theory of Arius spared neither. The Ebionitic Christ, though mutilated, was still a compassionate brother. The Docetic Christ, though mutilated, was still a divine and redeeming Lord. But this super-angelic, Arian Christ invited neither sympathy nor worship; standing too high to be embraced, too low to be adored. The very conception was fatal to all tenderness of Christian sentiment; fatal to all

enthusiasm. A Church composed of such believers would have nursed and reared no martyrs.

Arius was therefore quickly arraigned, tried, deposed and banished from Egypt. But he found friends in his exile; friends in Palestine, and friends in Asia Minor, who like himself had been trained in the theological school at Antioch. The Christian world soon rang with his heresy, and rang with his complaints. Constantine, the new Christian Emperor, who had just vanquished Licinius and overturned the old Roman paganism, was greatly troubled by these dissensions. The merits of the controversy he did not pretend to understand, but the controversy itself was a great grief to him. The ten millions of Christian believers then within the boundaries of the Empire were the pillars of his throne, and he must needs have them stand well together. Hence the famous Council of Nice, "an assembly of martyrs," Theodoret has called it, such as had never been witnessed before, such as has never been witnessed since.

The master mind of the assembly was a young Deacon, then only twenty-nine years of age; Athanasius of Alexandria, diminutive in person, but in intellect the sharpest and most athletic man of his century. But like Paul, when near the end of his grand career, they *all* knew whom they had believed. The Creed of Arius was torn up and the fragments strewn upon the floor. And then with but two dissenting voices their own Creed was given to the world. It is by no means an exhaustive, nor even within its own prescribed limits a perfect, Creed. Its simple aim was to demolish the heresy of Arius, who had taught that Christ is neither God nor man. And this it did, affirming at once an eternal

Christ, co-essential with the Father, and a Christ made flesh, dying, rising, ascending, and now reigning, for our redemption.

This settled for centuries the great question then under debate; substantially settled it. There was still, it is true, and for many years, a hot conflict of opinions; but the Nicene Creed stood firm, like a pillar of iron amidst the flames; and in less than a hundred years Arianism was everywhere uprooted and destroyed.

Since the Lutheran Reformation this old heresy has re-appeared. It has had some advocates of learning, and ability, and moral earnestness. But it has never made much headway. The sentence of death has been upon it from the moment its mouth was opened. The feet of them that buried the elder Arianism were at the door, ready to carry it also out.

IV. And now it only remains for us to say, or to think, what Christendom for the most part has always thought and said, that *Christ is both God and man.*

The only other possible opinions are alike unscriptural, and have been all of them alike condemned. Standing where we now do, so far down these Christian centuries, with the Bible in our hands, it will not do for us to say, that Christ is only Human. It will not do for us to say, that Christ is only Divine. Still less will it do for us to say, that Christ is neither Divine nor Human. It only remains for us to say that he is both. We are absolutely shut up to this decision. It is required of us by history. It is required of us by logic. And above all, it is required of us by the Scriptures.

Many of the more important passages relied upon for the support of this opinion, have already been adduced. Many, I say, but by no means all of them. With respect to the absolute and essential Divinity of our Lord, which is the point most questioned, it is here well worthy of remark that the Logos type of doctrine commonly termed Johannean, does not appear for the first time in the Gospel of the beloved disciple. We meet with this same type of doctrine in two at least of the Pauline Epistles, written years before the Gospel of John. This Gospel has been assigned by the best critics to about the year 80. But in the year 57, Paul, writing to the Corinthians, spoke of Christ as "the image of God;" and again in the year 62, writing to the Colossians, he said of him: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature;" which rendered more exactly would be, *born prior to every creature.* This of course takes Christ entirely out of the category of things created. Indeed, in the very next sentence it is expressly declared, that Christ is himself the Creator of all things, that he is before all things, and that by him all things consist. In the chapter that follows it is added: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Precisely the same type of doctrine is met with also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, if not from Paul's own pen, is thoroughly imbued with his spirit, and must have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. In this Epistle Christ is described as "The brightness of [God's] glory, and the express image of his person [or *essence*], and upholding all things by the word of his power." Here surely, in its very pith and marrow, is the doc-

trine of the eternal Logos, standing forth as the manifestation of the Divine Essence, the Revealer of the Unrevealed, the Word of the Ineffable, the Visible of the Invisible. If any man objects to the phrase "Eternal Generation," first employed by Origen, let him ponder well these texts. And let him ponder well the meaning of that other Scripture, of later date, from the pen of John: "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

As to the Manhood, the real and complete Manhood, of our Redeemer, so abundant is the proof of it, that one hardly knows at what point to begin his argument. Christianity itself could have taken no start in history, had there been no such personage as Jesus of Nazareth. This "destructive superstition," as Tacitus pronounced it, was a veritable historic phenomenon, requiring a veritable historic cause. In short, Christianity required a Christ. It must have had a Christ, an historic, human Christ, who, as Tacitus relates, suffered the punishment of death in Judea under Pontius Pilate the Procurator, Tiberius being then the Emperor of Rome. Julius Cæsar himself, stricken down by the daggers of assassins on the floor of the Senate House, is not more historic and human, than the crucified Nazarene. Indeed, it was a common thing for the Christians of that age to be spoken of as "disciples of the man that was hanged."

That Matthew, Mark, and Luke clearly teach the Humanity of Christ surely needs no proof in the face of a rampant criticism, which avers that they teach nothing else. Even the last refinement of heresy on this point, which denies only the human *soul* in Christ,

the heresy of Apollinaris, is, as we have seen, effectually shut off by what Luke has said of the child Jesus growing in wisdom as he grew in years, and in favor with God as well as man. Turn we, then, to the Logos Evangelist, as some have called him; bowing with reverence before that saintly head, so dear to Christian art, which used to be pillowed so fondly upon the Master's bosom. Read his Gospel, this Gospel of the Eternal Logos, till you feel the human pulse in it, beating as in no other of the Gospels, underneath all that wealth of wisdom and of glory. Go, take your stand near the cross of the dying Saviour, and there read these words of John: "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Tell me, can you resist the feeling, that here was a dying man, in the last gush of tenderest filial affection committing his poor mother to the care of his staunchest friend? Then go to Ephesus, and behold that aged Apostle, returned some time ago from the visions of Patmos, and watch his kindling features as he writes of "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life." Here also the two elements are blended, as in the first chapter of John's Gospel; nor is the Divinity of the Divine element one whit more positively affirmed than the Humanity of the Human.

To all this add now the testimony of Christ himself. At the very lowest, I shall assume it to be conceded,

as it is almost universally conceded, that he was an honest man; as honest as ever lived. It will also be conceded, that he was too great and too sober a man, too well balanced in all his faculties, to be the victim of self-delusion. He could not have been deceived himself; he would not have deceived others. What, then, did this good and great man say of himself? That he claimed to be the Son of God in a sense which implied absolute equality with the Father, and provoked the charge of blasphemy from the unbelieving Jews, not once or twice only, but repeatedly, not ambiguously, but with the utmost distinctness and emphasis, is beyond denial. For example, when charged with breaking the Sabbath because on that day he had performed a miracle of healing, which miracle of itself proved at least a Divine commission, his startling answer was: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Instantly the cry was raised, that he had made himself equal with God. That was the Jewish interpretation of what he said. Did he correct it? Did he let it pass in silence even? Neither. But in an elaborate rejoinder he re-affirmed and justified the astounding claim. He declared that what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. The raising of the dead is an act of the Son, as well as of the Father. The final judgment of the world, he said, had been wholly committed to him, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. Thus he spoke in Jerusalem two years before he suffered. And thus he spoke repeatedly; sometimes in the presence of his enemies, watching to entangle him in his speech, sometimes in the presence only of his own disciples, demanding to know

precisely who he was. His claim to be the Messiah, the Christ, exposed him only to the charge of imposture. It was his claim to be the Son of God, which evoked the charge of blasphemy. This was the very charge, on which he was at last arraigned before the Sanhedrim. There is no evading the record. It stands now as a part of the legal history of the world, that this man of Nazareth, this son of a Hebrew mother, set himself forth in Palestine as the Son of God, and in so doing, by his own admission, asserted for himself unqualified equality with God.

And yet he claimed also to be a man. His disciples, in their deep reverence, called him the Son of God. He usually spoke of himself as the Son of man, employing this one of the Messianic titles, found in Daniel, apparently because Jewish usage had not dragged it in the dust. That he should expressly assert, and elaborately demonstrate his Humanity, just as he asserted and demonstrated his Divinity, was not required. The Humanity was already obvious enough to all. For thirty years he had lived humbly amongst the hills of Galilee. He had been baptized in the Jordan. He walked, and was weary. He hungered, and ate. He slept, and was refreshed. He looked on the landscape, and drank in its beauty. He saw sad sights, and was grieved. He loved, and was loved in return. He stood by the grave of a friend, and wept. He prayed, and was strengthened. Once he prayed, but in vain, for the cup to pass. Then at length he died, and rose again from the dead with the marks of the nails in his hands and feet.

We are accordingly driven to the conclusion that he was both God and man. And this is the conclusion,

to which, in their own hearts, the Pharisees themselves were driven by the consummate logic of that discourse, which has furnished our text. With this passage our argument may well conclude. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions." They could not answer, because they would not answer. And they would not answer, because they could not answer without confessing that the Christ of the Hebrew Scriptures must needs be both God and man.

Let us beware of that leaven of the unbelieving Pharisees. Let us never distrust our Lord's own words. Let us not break fellowship with his immediate disciples. Let us not break fellowship with the noble army of martyrs. Let us not break fellowship with the great company of the redeemed, thronging the centuries behind us. Let us not break fellowship with the myriads upon myriads now casting their crowns at the Saviour's feet. Let us never hesitate to confess with our lips, nor to believe in our hearts, that the great Captain of our salvation is both David's son and David's Lord; born in Bethlehem of a virgin mother, and yet the only and eternally begotten of the Eternal Father.

Of the *philosophy* of this grand doctrine, I have nothing now to say. The Incarnate God is necessarily

an Incarnate Mystery. We shall never fathom it in this world. We shall never fathom it to all eternity. There is no philosophy of it in the Scriptures. For some time there was no philosophy of it attempted in Christendom. It waited for no philosophy in order to be believed. It has already survived many philosophies, and will survive many more. Justin Martyr believed before he reasoned, as well as after; nay, reasoned because he had first believed. Origen reasoned better and farther than Justin Martyr. Athanasius reasoned better and farther than Origen. But Athanasius did not say the last word. It was not said at Ephesus. It was not said at Chalcedon. It was not said at Constantinople in the seventh century. It has not yet been said. Thanks to the assailants of this central doctrine of our religion, better and better statements of it have been fashioned from age to age. Better and better statements of it are in store for us in the ages to come. As new objections are invented, new formulas will be framed to meet them. And doubtless the time is coming, if not already come, when philosophy herself shall stand reverent and enraptured in the presence of this transcendent mystery.

But in any event, the mystery itself is safe. It is not in the keeping of the schools. It is in the keeping of the Church. It is in the keeping of our Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The human brain may reel under it; but the human heart must have it, or perish. In the midst of the raging billows there stands no other rock. In the midst of the pitchy darkness there shines no other star. We behold all around us a world estranged

from holiness; a world cast out from the bosom of its God. But not cast out forever. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift; that bosom opens itself for our return. Nay, it comes throbbing down to meet us. The Divine clasps the Human, that the Human may make its way back to the Divine. Great indeed is this mystery of the Gospel; but no greater than our need of it.

Dear Lord! once crowned with thorns, now crowned with glory in the heavens, henceforward thou art ours, and we are thine. Oh, forget us not when thou comest in the clouds.

THE WORDS OF JESUS

AS TO

FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

BETWEEN orthodox Christians and "liberal Christians," as they are pleased to call themselves, the question which it is the object of this tract to treat is one sharply contested. Both parties agree that the words of THE MASTER furnish the end of controversy, and they agree that on this topic the Lord Jesus has spoken. Strange would it be if on the vital question of *the future destiny of men* he were silent. Three questions naturally arise:

1. Does Jesus teach that in the future state some men will be excluded from the place where God's presence is manifested?

2. Does Jesus assert that in the future state some persons will be visited with pain and misery?

3. If so, what is said by him as to the character, degree and duration of future punishment?

Since some object to receiving as authoritative the teachings of secondary teachers, even though they be apostles, we waive for the present all testimony but that of the Master himself. To meet the views of such persons, the words of Peter, Paul and John are excluded, and those of Jesus alone are given. To his authority we all bow. With teachable minds and prayerful hearts let us then read and ponder his words on this fearfully solemn subject.

"Therefore," says Jesus, "whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

EXCLUSION.

Does Jesus teach that any shall be excluded from the presence of the Lord?

In Luke xiii. 23–28, it is recorded: "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all *ye* workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out."

In Matthew vii. 21–23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter

into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

In Matthew xxii. 11–14: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

Matthew xix. 23, 24. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through

the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

In Luke xiv. 16–24: "Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

"And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

"So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and the hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

In John iii. 3: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

In John iii. 36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

In John viii. 21: "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."

In Matthew vii. 13, 14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait *is* the gate and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Reader! as in the sight of God before whom your soul must stand, decide whether any of the sons of men will be finally excluded from his presence! Can you deny it? Can you doubt it?

And what will be the condition of those who are excluded? Does not Jesus teach that it will be one of deplorable wretchedness and fearful ruin? Hear his words.

THE CONDITION OF THE REJECTED.

In Mark xvi. 16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

In Matthew xxiii. 33: "*Ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

In Matthew x. 28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

In Matthew xiv. 21: "The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

In Matthew xiii.: "Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares in the field. He answered and said unto them,

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man: the field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire: so shall it be at the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

What, reader, do these words teach as to the condition in the future state of those whom Christ will not confess as his brethren? But note particularly, both in these passages and in others, the figures by which the loving Saviour of sinners portrays the

CHARACTER AND DEGREE OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

In Matthew xxv. 41–46: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was a hun-

gered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

"Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

"Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

In Luke xvi. 19–26: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. * * And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was bur

ied: and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence."

Mark ix. 43–49: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched. And if thine eye offend thee,

pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

HOW LONG?

Hear also the words of Jesus as to how long this exclusion and punishment will last.

In Mark iii. 28–30: "Verily, I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."

In Luke xvi. 26: "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence."

Mark ix. 43–49: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and

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In Matthew xxv. 41, 46: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

God grant, dear reader, that it be not your lot to go away into *everlasting punishment!*

THE PASTORAL OFFICE;

ITS VALUE, AND ADVANTAGES AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE STATED SUPPLY.

Our aim, in this brief treatise, is to show the superior value of the Pastoral Office over the relation of a Stated Supply, in the work of the ministry. For this purpose we would first direct attention to *the characteristic features* of each, so that we may estimate their relative worth.

The "Stated Supply" is an office unknown to ecclesiastical law; hence the usage which determines his relation to his people may vary in different congregations. We shall not, however, be far from the common practice, if we say that the stated supply enters into a contract with the trustees of a congregation, to serve it in his ministerial capacity, a given length of time, for a specified compensation. This statement covers the whole of his relation. He is simply a man serving under contract.

The pastor, on the contrary, holds an office; an office appointed of God and having its duties and requirements fully set forth in his word. To this, according to the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church, he is elected by the votes of the worshiping congregation. The wisdom of this election having been approved by the presbytery that has

the oversight of the congregation, he is inducted into his office, under the solemnity of most sacred vows of mutual fidelity. Neither may he lay aside, nor be divested of this office, except for reasons to be judged of and found sufficient by the same tribunal—the Presbytery.

The difference between the two relations, it will be seen, is radical. The grounds of preference for the pastoral relation over the other are readily seen and suggested.

I. The Pastoral Relation guards the sacred desk as the other does not.

1. It lessens the liability in the first place, of having an unworthy occupant placed in charge of the pulpit. This is apparent if we consider the parties who officially control its interests under the two systems respectively. In the one case, it is the church, the body of believers; in the other, the society, the civil corporation.

Now the trustees of the civil corporation who hire the supply, are elected to their office in view of their ability to promote the financial interests of the society. Doubtless they are not ordinarily men who would disregard spiritual interests. But godliness is not a requisite for eligibility to the office. It will, and does occur, that worldly persons, sometimes even scoffers at spiritual religion, are entrusted with this office; and it is not a rare thing that the professors of religion are in a minority in the Board. We may hope that there would not often be occasion to complain of their putting unworthy men into the pulpit. Yet it is apparent that they are not the proper guardians of its piety or orthodoxy. They may intend to be faithful to

their trust, and yet regard only those popular talents which would fill a house, and keep up the revenues of the congregation.

Under the other system the charge of the pulpit is with the bench of elders, officers not of the society, but of the church. Men chosen to their office with special reference to piety, knowledge of the word of God, wisdom and prudence, and placed under solemn vows "to study the peace, unity, and purity of the church." It is for them to seek out the man who may properly be presented to the people as worthy to become their pastor; and the pastor must so commend himself to the church, that they shall say by their ballots, "We have good hopes that your ministrations in the gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests."

Now, in this case, the matter is put into the right hands, where, if anywhere, the real object for which the ministry is appointed will be regarded. It is true that haste and inadvertence may open even this door to the unworthy; or hypocrisy and guile may impose upon elders and people for a time; but there is little danger that those wanting in the *essential* qualifications of the ministry will be installed into the pastorate of the churches.

A further safeguard is added under the pastoral system, by the *reference of the call to the Presbytery* having the care of the church, for its judgment in the case. By this, the pastor elect is required to approve himself to an unprejudiced body, as one who is, through gifts and graces, worthy to hold the office. And if deficiency in his acquaintance with divine truth, or erroneous tendencies of mind, have escaped the notice

of the congregation, the Presbytery may be expected to detect them. Or, if his past history reveal a lack of piety or due discretion, it will rarely be unknown to the entire Presbytery; or if unknown, the means of securing information will be at hand.

Thus this system presents the best security which human wisdom can offer against the danger of having unsuitable men placed in our churches as ministers; an evil which the stated supply system, by its laxness, rather invites.

2. But in case the minister already in charge of a pulpit is found unworthy, then this system again presents its advantages.

It pertains to the nature of an office that, for sufficient reasons, he who holds it may be deposed. And it is only requisite, where a minister stands in the pastoral relation, that the evidence of his unworthiness be presented, and the bonds that unite him and his people may be loosed at once, and his connection with the pulpit legally severed. But if the supply, hired for a specified term of service, be found faulty, there is no such relief. Whatever scandal he may bring upon the church, or whatever grief to the disciples, they have no alternative but to break their contract, which it is doubtful if Christians may ever do, or to suffer the evil until the term of engagement, which may be months, shall expire.

3. But whilst the pastoral relation thus guards the pulpit from desecration by an unhallowed ministry, it also guards it from subjection to unreasonable, restless, or wayward hearers.

We must in every place and relation count upon meeting with unreasonable men, who like and dislike,

sustain and oppose, with no valid reason. Such may be expected in every congregation. And if the minister of the Gospel can claim no right to hold his pulpit, if the whim or caprice, or prejudice of the parishioner is a sufficient warrant for his removal, then the best and most faithful minister is liable at any time to have his settlement broken up, and his work interrupted.

Now the stated supply, hired perhaps for a year, has no authority to retain his pulpit when the time of his contract expires. His warrant expires with the contract, and it is entirely optional with his people to renew that contract. They may simply say, "We do not care to keep you any longer," and the matter is at an end. He is thus displaced with a facility that encourages the restless to raise opposition to him. But the pastor once instated in his office, holds his pulpit thereafter by a presumptive right, and he who seeks his removal must show a proper reason. In this fact he has a safeguard against being causelessly assailed.

Another ground of preference for the pastoral office is that

II. The pastoral relation permits the minister to count on permanence in his field of labor.

Not that it will always secure permanence. Nor yet that the supply may not often maintain his position for as long a time as the pastor. But the pastoral relation has permanence for its law. Change in it is the violent and unlooked for interruption of natural order. Thus the pastor is encouraged, as far as may be, to expect permanence, and permitted to lay out his work with reference to it.

With the supply it is the reverse of all this. His contract sets a specific limit to the term of his labor. He may indeed hope to renew that contract as its term expires. But he is forbidden to anticipate anything beyond its limit. His contract itself is the protest of his people against his presuming on continuance. The difference is this: The pastor is instructed, and the supply forbidden, to anticipate permanence.

Now let the supply, in these circumstances, hold his place for a series of years, yet he loses much of the benefits of that permanence; for he lacks the anticipation of it, a thing essential to the proper laying out and execution of his work.

A farm, rented by the single year, cannot be kept up properly; because good husbandry requires much work to be done with reference to results to be reached at a distant day. Nor is the same end attained should it be let to the same individual from year to year. The difficulty lies in the short lease compelling cultivation with reference to immediate results. Not otherwise is it with the work of the ministry. The man who regards his settlement as a permanent one, may take time, and lay broad foundations, expecting through sound instruction and patient culture, to surround himself with a stable Christian community, and a church efficient in every good work. But he whose stay is limited to the few weeks of a year, must lay out his work accordingly. A few sermons only can be presented. A brief statement of a few leading doctrines, a few homilies on Christian morals, and a few appeals to the heart and conscience, are all he can embrace in his plan. Such superficial work is all he is authorized to undertake, and a superficial Chris-

tianity is the most that can reasonably be expected as the result.

It is then an important consideration in favor of the pastoral office that it permits the minister to anticipate permanence, and to lay out his work accordingly.

III. The pastoral relation places the minister and people under covenant obligations.

In establishing this relation, both he and they are brought to the house of God, when they take upon them solemn vows. At his altar they mutually pledge themselves to fidelity in the discharge of their respective duties; he in dispensing the word and leading the flock, and they in receiving instruction and reproof, and in giving him both moral and material support.

The practical value of this is apparent. It is a transaction that must give intensity to the sense of obligation, and make it a more controlling influence. These covenant vows are not without effect. The conscience feels their power; and by their aid we are often held to the path of duty, when without them temptation would prove too much for us. They are to our virtue what the surgeon's splints and bandages are to a weak or fractured limb, giving it support and strength, and holding it in position.

So, in seeking the Lord, we are instructed to join ourselves to him "in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." The Christian parent, prompted to the religious training of his child by every principle of his faith and of his parental love, is called on nevertheless to dedicate that child to God at the sacred altar, and to enter into covenant to train it for him, and he finds his heart more enlisted in the work be-

cause of those vows. Is there not reason then for placing the minister and his people under this influence? It may reasonably be expected that by virtue of it, both he and they will exhibit greater fidelity, and thus their joint labors prove more efficient for good, their mutual relations be more satisfactory, and in the end also, the permanence of the ministry be promoted.

Nor are the concomitant circumstances of the pastor's installation unimportant. The solemnities connected with it, the public nature of the transaction, in which the presbytery, after a due consideration of the case, invest him with official authority, and the solemn charges, giving both pastor and people admonition and counsel regarding their respective duties in this relation, are all calculated to put such dignity upon the office, and to give it such character as to impress the parties with a sense of its importance.

Now let our ministers and churches be brought under these influences, and our people be trained to regard the institution of the ministry in the light in which this presents it, and if the ministry does not become more stable, and if all the ends of its establishment are not more fully met, it would be strange indeed.

Again,

IV. The pastoral office is of advantage as it affects the relation of hearts.

The work of the ministry is one that regards especially the heart. It is in this respect unlike the work of the laborer or mechanic. The latter may do his work with no interest in his employer, caring only for his money. And it is unlike the work of an ordinary

teacher, in which the understanding alone is concerned. While feeding his people with knowledge, and instructing them in truth, it is the heart to which the labors of the minister have special reference. To effect this is his object. His is a work of influencing, persuading, consoling, comforting, guiding. It involves the exercise of sympathies, and for its most perfect performance, requires that they should have unobstructed flow, that heart should meet heart; and that mutual confidence and affection should be had. These are conditions of success in the ministry. The pastor's heart must be open to the people, and theirs to him. His, that he may feel with them in all their griefs, and trials, and perplexities. Theirs, that his counsel or instruction, or warning, or reproof, may enter in and do its work. Unless his heart be thus in sympathy with his people, he cannot adapt his ministrations to their wants. Without their confidence and affection, the best presentations of truth will fail of their proper effect.

The settlement of a pastor is an expression of confidence and affection. By the act of his settlement the people assure him of their regard for him, and bid him let his affections flow out to them. They bid him expect a home among them till God in his providence shall call him away. And thus they place his heart under those influences best adapted to call out his sympathies as well as their own.

Compared with this, the relation of a stated supply, is a frigid one. A susceptible mind cannot but feel it so, and be influenced accordingly. And as the contract is annually repeated, "for another year," the minister cannot well help feeling that he is held off at

arm's length; that the confidence of his people is withheld from him, and that "another year" is as much as they dare venture with him. They may not be wanting in their regard, but if he has that sensibility which a cultivated mind will ordinarily possess, it will scarcely fail so to seem to him, and the depressing influence of that thought will tell on his ministrations.

Moreover, the stated supply dare not allow his affections full scope, or his sympathies free play. He is not dwelling among his own people. He is a stranger hired for a term of service, and must hold himself in readiness to leave them when that term expires.

It must be manifest from these considerations that the establishment of the pastoral relation, as it influences the relation of hearts, places the minister in a more advantageous position for the accomplishment of the ends of his calling than that of the stated supply.

V. The pastoral office favors independence in the pulpit,—

That independence which is essential to ministerial fidelity. This results from the fact that it is *an office*. Ideas, it is said, ultimately rule the world. Ideas, thrown into the mind, beget their logical sequences. Now the idea of *office* and that of *contract*, which underlie respectively the relations of pastor and supply, are diametrically opposed. The one is authority, the other is subjection. If a man be invested with office, we expect him to look to the constitution and laws which define his duties and prerogatives, and to be governed by them in all his official doings; and we render to him reverence and submission as the repre-

sentative of that law. But if a man be employed under contract, we expect him to consult the wish of his employer and to find his law in his will. And these inherent ideas, the two relations respectively carry with them and thrust upon the attention of the people.

The ministry, in the two, is looked at from entirely different stand-points. The pastor is the ambassador of Christ, his minister and messenger to the churches commissioned by him to declare his counsel. But the supply is the servant of the church, employed by them for certain ends which they have in mind.

Now when these ideas have so wrought in the mind as to bring out their legitimate results, give the pastoral relation, and the minister will feel himself called upon "to declare the whole counsel of God," reproving and rebuking sin of every form or wherever found, as one who must give account to God for his fidelity. The people, on the other hand, looking up to him with reverence as one empowered from above, will "receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and submit to him in" all the functions of his office. With a "supply," the people will feel that they are the authority to whom the pulpit is responsible, and the judges of what is proper to be presented there, and will require that their wishes or prejudices, or opinions be consulted in all its utterances; and the minister will be in danger of yielding to their authority, and submitting to their dictation, of ceasing to be the expounder of God's law, and the former of public sentiment in Christian morals, and of becoming the time-server and man-pleaser.

This, indeed, will not in all cases be fully realized,

but in the degree in which the influence of this system is felt, must this result be reached; in just this degree must the voice of the pulpit cease to be the voice of God, and become the echo of the local public sentiment; and in just this degree will the pulpit fail of the great end for which the ministry of the word was instituted.

In order that the pulpit may not be brought under the domination to men, and so lose its fealty to Christ, it is important that the true relation of the minister, as an office-bearer in the church, be maintained; that both minister and people have this truth ever impressed on their minds, that he is acting under a divine appointment, receiving his commission and authority from above; and that he is to "please, not men, but God."

Such are the grounds on which we commend the pastoral office. And each of these considerations separately, as we conceive, presents a valid ground of preference for this relation. Each, it is thought, is sufficient by itself alone, to determine us in its favor. We are persuaded it only wants that they be properly considered, to bring our churches back with one consent to "the old paths" in which our fathers walked, as "the good way" wherein we "shall find rest," stability and growth.

Our argument may be thrown into one brief paragraph. The establishment of this office throws the best of human safeguards around the sacred desk, to guard it from unworthy occupants or causeless interruptions. It provides for thoroughness in pulpit instruction by permitting the minister to lay out his work on the presumption of time for its execution.

It places both minister and people under such covenant vows that their solemn obligations and responsibilities shall be most emphatically realized; and into such a relation that the gospel may be presented under the most favorable circumstances for the exercise of its influence upon the heart. And it ever points to God as the source of all authority, the great Head of the Church to whom the minister and the people must render their account.

THE END.

INFANT BAPTISM.

BY THE REV. S. M. CAMPBELL, D. D.

We cannot very well decide whether it is proper to baptize our children or not without asking the questions, "What is baptism? What does it mean? For what purpose was it intended?" In attempting to find an answer to this question in the New Testament, one is struck with the constant connection between baptism and believing, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." When a man came to the apostles as a believer, and secured their confidence, they baptized him. It was a kind of certificate they gave him that he was accepted as a Christian—a seal which they set upon him as a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. On this point our Baptist brethren would probably entirely agree with us. Baptism was administered as a visible token that a man was accepted as a believer. It was a sign or seal of "the righteousness of faith."

The question to be decided then is whether God has given us any authority to place the seal of faith on persons who are not yet believers. We do not pretend that the chil-

dren whom we baptize are all true Christians. Most of them are too young to have any knowledge of Christ. They have no faith: what right have we to place on them the seal of the righteousness of faith?

The answer to this question is, God directs us to do so. In the ancient times of the Church they had a seal of faith somewhat different from the one now in use, and in those times God directed to have the seal set upon the children of believers, as well as upon believers themselves. If you wish to know what that seal was, turn to Romans iv. 11, and read, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being uncircumcised." In the ancient times, then, circumcision was the seal of faith. If you wish to know whether that seal was to be applied to the children of believers or not, turn to Genesis xvii. 10, and read, "Every man-child among you shall be circumcised."

It appears, then, that at a very early day God gave a law that believers should not only receive the seal of faith for themselves, but should set it upon their children. We have a new seal, it is true, but that does not abrogate the law. The ancient statute holds good. The believer is not only to receive the seal of faith for himself, but is to set it upon his children.

Sometimes a soldier receives a badge, as a mark of honor, from the government. Suppose it to be a ribbon with some pretty de-

vice, and suppose that the law is that not only he may wear it, but his children. Now imagine that an edict is passed changing the device. The ribbon is found unsuitable: government orders that, instead of the ribbon, the badge shall be a gold star. Will not the children be as much entitled to wear the new badge as they were to wear the old? So is it with the seal of faith. God's heroes in ancient times received a badge; and, to give it the greater value, they were directed to have their children wear it also. Since then, the old badge has been found unsuitable, and an order has been issued prescribing a new one. Have the children lost their right to wear it? Or is it not the case, rather, that whereas the the old badge was one which the *boys* of the family alone could wear, and whereas the new one is purposely so made that it is suitable for both the boys and the girls, we are to understand that we are to place it on all our children, without distinction of sex? The privilege has not been restricted by the change, but enlarged and beautified.

This, then, is our authority for baptizing children. Baptism is a seal of the righteousness of faith. We have an ancient law in the Church, directing believers not only to place the seal of faith on themselves, but upon their children. The fashion of the seal has been changed, but the good old law has never been repealed. It stands there yet. See Genesis xvii. 10.

It is a great privilege to have our children

baptized. The promise is, "I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee;" and to give strong assurance that this promise shall be fulfilled, God tells us to go directly forward and place the seal of faith on our offspring, as if they were believers already. If we did so with stronger faith, he would often meet us in the very act, and renew our children's hearts at the instant we thus claimed his promise.

It is a serious obligation we assume in baptizing our children. We consecrate them to God. We enter into covenant to give them a Christian nurture. We must faithfully keep our vow.

Baptized children are under peculiar obligations to be the Lord's. They have been given to God. The seal is on them. God authorized the transaction. If other persons ought to be Christians, they more. If they continue in sin and sink to ruin, they will have it to answer for, that, like profane Esau, they have despised their birthright.

SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE.

The doctrine of saints' perseverance does not mean, 1 That Christians always will be equally engaged in religion. Nor, 2. That they will never fall into sin. Nor, 3. That they feel sure of their own perseverance. 4. It does not mean that men will not fall from seriousness, conviction, profession, sound doctrine, or sound morals. Nor, 5. That perseverance is the same thing as being saved. Nor, 6. That exciting fears, hopes and warnings are unnecessary. 7. Neither does it mean that there is anything in Christians, or in religion itself, which will secure salvation.

But the doctrine does mean that the promises of God make it certain that *real* Christians will persevere, and not so fall away as finally to be lost. The objections and arguments against saints' perseverance are no *direct* evidence that a Christian *does* fall and perish, but they are appearances, suppositions, implications, and warnings against apostasy.

Some have regarded perfection as the condition of perseverance, and talk about persevering if they do not sin. Such a view would have no application to any but holy beings, and would be no comfort to us sinners. The perseverance of the saints has been doubted because they fall into sin. On the same ground, it might be denied that God ever made a promise in favor of any who are not perfect in holiness. The very fact that we are sinners, and have no strength of our own, shows the reason

and value of the promise of perseverance. Warnings against apostasy are no greater objections against the doctrine of perseverance than means are against the fulfillment of any other Divine promise.

This doctrine no more interferes with free agency than anything which God has said about the advancement of his cause or the coming of the millenium. It does not tend to negligence or licentiousness, for sects disbelieving it have the most who appear to fall from grace. They derive their notion from these apparent falls, and not from the assertions of Scripture. Apparent falls are no objections unless it can be proved that the fallen once had grace. It is preposterous to name such men as Judas as instances of falling from grace. John informs us that before his fall he complained of the waste of ointment, "not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief." A year or two earlier than this, Christ said, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" From what grace could a thief and a devil fall? Attempting to prove falling from grace by the passage, "Ye are fallen from grace," is much like Papists attempting to prove the "real presence" by, "This is my body." If words must always be taken in their literal sense, independently of the connection, I can prove that God is literally "a rock," and that "there is no God." Turn to Gal. v. 4, and the connection will show you that the falling spoken of is falling from being saved by grace to being saved by works—from the doctrines of grace to that of being justified by the deeds of the law—from such doctrines as that which we now maintain to such as that of falling from grace.

It is not necessary to consume time in answering objections. My object is to prove the doctrine of saints' perseverance. If it is completely proved, the most specious objections have no weight. If the circular form

of the earth is *proved*, the objection that the heads of those on the lower side must be downward amounts to nothing. So if the doctrine of saints' perseverance admits of absolute proof, a volume of objections should not be allowed the weight of a feather.

Most of the following arguments were not called up by the present occasion, but by the exigencies of a ministry of forty years, in which they have been successfully used to establish wavering minds.

I. One argument in favor of it is, *the silence of the Bible on being born the third time.* If any fall from grace, they fall into the ranks of the impenitent, and may be converted the *second*, or born the *third* time. The Bible mentions the birth of Seth, Isaac and Moses, referring to the first birth. In the discourse with Nicodemus mention is made of the spiritual birth, which is called being "born again," or born the second time. But the Word of God is entirely silent as to any who are born the third or fourth time. Therefore I conclude that none are born more than twice. They then persevere, and do not go back to impenitency, to be born the third time. Is it true that a man may be alternately saint and impenitent sinner? Can he fall from grace a moment after conversion, and then be converted again? Can he live a holy life, and a moment before death fall and be lost? The Apostle shows that such things are not possible where he says, "It is impossible, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance." Thus, not only the silence, but the declaration of the Bible, shows that men are not born the third time, which is evidence that the subjects of the second birth persevere. The second birth is as much the creation of an existence which will never end as the first.

II. *The Bible nowhere expresses joy that any died before they fell from grace.* If the doctrine of universal salva-

tion is true, the flood was a greater blessing to those who were drowned than the ark was to Noah. While they were at once swept to heaven, he was left in this vale of tears, to bear the ills of life three hundred and fifty years; and then his death might have been as hard as theirs. If men fall from grace, the death of every regenerated person is a thousand times greater blessing than either. If Christians *may* fall, if there is a bare possibility of their falling, it is unspeakably important that an end be put to their lives while their religion lasts. The Bible speaks of the death of not a few saints. In the Revelation there are notices of the souls of those who died, and who are to die during the standing of the Papal power. If the doctrine of falling from grace is true, all such stood in imminent peril during their Christian warfare; and yet in no case is it intimated that any were so happy as to die before they fell from grace.

III. *The Bible is also silent as to a purgatory*, or middle region, for the souls of such as were once Christians, fell from grace and are lost. They have had the iniquity committed before their fall pardoned, and God makes the same promise to them as to repenting Jews: "I will remember their sin no more." They perish after their former sin has been so canceled by the blood of Christ that it can never be brought against them. If Christians fall from grace, some born again in childhood may walk with God seventy years, and fall, live in sin a day, and die without being born the third time. We must resort to Popery to find a place to dispose of their souls. There stands against them but the sin of a day. What becomes of this long period of canceled sin, all the acts of faith and foretastes of heaven enjoyed during threescore and ten years?

IV. *The repentance of a sinner creates joy in heaven.* Christ says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels

of God over one sinner that repenteth—joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Children rejoice over trifles. As the capacity enlarges in youth, in riper years, and in higher orders of mind, it will require greater things to excite joy. Nothing would really rejoice such a mind as that of Washington but a matter of some such magnitude as the liberty of a country. What is large enough to create joy in the giant intellects around the throne of God? Nothing short of the repentance of a sinner.

On earth we frequently rejoice over transient good, and are so mistaken that we often rejoice over that to-day which we weep over to-morrow. In the war of 1812 hearing guns all day, I was told that the firing was caused by the news of a victory. A corrected report from the army stated that our loss was five hundred men. There are no such mistakes in heaven. When angels rejoice, it is over certain and permanent good. It is because they absolutely know that a soul is raised from the sentence of death to a sure title to eternal life. But if regeneration only raises the soul to a place where it is liable at any moment to fall back and be lost, it would fill heaven with solicitude and suspense instead of joy. A conversion does not so much rejoice us as angels, because we can neither so much appreciate its nature nor be so certain of its reality. Suppose that it is to-day announced in heaven that a sinner is converted, and the place is filled with new joy. To-morrow the regenerated soul falls from grace and is lost. Heaven must now be filled with grief and shame, and devils will rejoice. Is it so? Will devils ever rejoice over any who have been the joy of angels? It cannot be. There are no mistakes, no disappointments in heaven. If its inhabitants rejoice "over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety

and nine just persons," it is because they know that he will persevere, escape hell, and finally join them in heaven. Whether our doctrine is believed on earth or not, it is most surely believed in heaven.

V. *Full assurance of hope proves it.* Though none in this life attain perfection in holiness, full assurance of hope is often attained. If men fall from grace there neither is nor can be any such doctrine. If Job, David and Paul *knew* that they were saints, it could give them no assurance of salvation; for they were liable to fall and be lost. Job said, "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth, and that in my flesh I shall see God." David said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." Paul said, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." These holy men spoke very unadvisedly and at random unless they believed in the perseverance of the saints.

VI. *The attributes of God prove it.* The advocates of falling from grace are Arminians, depending too much on man and too little on God for salvation. If our salvation is more the work of man than God, we are sure to fall. And so we are if we depend partly on works and partly on grace. But if we make Christ all and self nothing, we build on a permanent foundation. Sanctification is as much the work of God as regeneration, and he will carry it on in a manner honorable to himself. If our God, like heathen deities, were changeable, his works would be of the same character. But is it like the unchangeable God to begin a great work, and leave it unfinished?

One of the attributes of God is *love.* He says to his

people, "I have loved thee with an *everlasting* love." He so loved them while they were yet sinners that he sent the Saviour to purchase their ransom, and forgave their sins. Having proceeded thus far in the work of their salvation, will he abandon it? In Rom. v. 8, 10, the Apostle thus proves our doctrine: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." This shows that God would be much more likely to persevere in the work of saving us than to begin it, and that, if he has justified or regenerated us, he will save us. John xii, 1, says, "Jesus having loved his own, which were in the world, loved them unto the end." Has he so changed the permanency of his love that he does not love his own unto the end? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Other Scriptures teach that he keeps and protects them as the apple of his eye. With such love, tenderness and care, will he suffer them to fall away and perish?

Another attribute is *power*. This is pledged for the perseverance of the saints. If it depended on the power of man, every saint would fall. We may expect the fall of all such as are relying on their own strength to maintain a holy life; but the Bible says, saints "are kept by the power of God." Christ says, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." If the work of sanctification were ours, it would stop before it was one-half or one-quarter done. But not so with Him who is able to "perform it until the day of

Jesus Christ." This power will secure from falling away every one who believes. The Apostle says, Rom. i, 16, "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Divine veracity is pledged for the perseverance of the saints. Christ says, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." As certainly as this is the Word of God, saints will have eternal life and escape perishing; for He, who cannot lie, says they will.

VII. *Election and predestination prove this doctrine.* The Bible does not so often represent saints as elected and predestinated to eternal happiness, as to a holy life or to perseverance. "Chosen in Christ, that they should be holy and without blame"—"predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." God chose them to become holy and to be like the Saviour. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" That is, who can bring any thing to prove their separation from Christ, or that he will not save them? The influence of false Christs and false prophets was shown to be so very great "that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." This shows that it was not possible to deceive fatally those who had been elected. The Apostle so closely unites foreknowledge, predestination and perseverance that they must stand or fall together. "For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son; whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here is a short chain, which Arminians have hammered for centuries without displacing a single link; and for their ill success they ought to be as thankful as we, for their salvation, as well as ours, depends upon the plan of God to carry through the work which he has begun. The several links are foreknowledge, predestina-

tion, regeneration, and receiving to heaven. The passage states that the justified *will* be glorified, which is the same as saying that the converted will be saved.

Suppose the three first steps are taken—that certain persons are foreknown, predestinated and regenerated, and then, instead of the fourth, being saved, they are suffered to fall from grace, does not the promise of God fail? Inspiration says, in so many words, *whom he justified, them he also glorified.* Do you dare say that God will not do just as Paul says he will? "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." This shows that such as believe will have eternal life. As in the above chain no link can be so displaced as to let any fall through between being converted and glorified, so in this passage none can fall through between believing and eternal life. They who believe the doctrines of election and predestination never doubt that of saints' perseverance.

VIII. *The promise to Christ in the covenant of redemption.* The saved are not persons occurring to the Divine mind for the first time on the day of their death or conversion. Their salvation was fixed in the Divine counsels from eternity. Paul said to the saints of Thessalonica, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation;" and to those of Ephesus, "He has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ himself." Peter represents the saints as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," and as "begotten to an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven."

Passages like these show that the work of saving saints began a long time ago—in eternity. Isaiah says, Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. He shall see his seed." If they who were elected and adopted as children before the foundation of the world,

whom Christ saw to be his seed, and who receive the washing away of their sins by the blood of Christ at their regeneration, may fall from grace and be lost, the plan of redemption may in part or entirely fail, and the precious blood of Christ be wasted on such as perish. Did Christ come, suffer, and make the atonement on such uncertainties? Instead of this, Christ came, having had a certain number given to him, who were to come to him and be saved. He said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" and to remove all doubt of his saving all who came, or were converted, he added, "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." To strengthen the proof of their perseverance still more, he said, John vi. 39, "And this is the Father's will—that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

These and similar passages show us that every one who ever was or ever will be born again was given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, and as certainly that he will keep every one of them from falling from grace. He calls the saints his sheep, and says, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life." He does not merely give them a life which will last until they fall into sin or fall from grace; but a life which will last to eternity. The next clause adds clearness and strength: "They shall never perish," John x. 28. What does this mean, if numbers of them do actually fall away and perish? The last clause of the verse still strengthens the proof: "Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." To cap the climax, the next verse adds, "None is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Thus the power, veracity and will of two persons of the Trinity are pledged to prevent the fall of such as are given to Christ. If Satan, man, or the remains of unsanctified nature can procure their fall, these

promises, the power of God, and the covenant of redemption are a failure.

But look at one more passage: "Thou hast given him power—that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." This says again that as many as are given to Christ shall have *eternal* life. Can men be given to Christ, receive eternal life, and then be lost? If it had read *temporary* or *transitory* life, they might fall. But can they outlive everlasting happiness, and perish?

IX. *The intercession of Christ.* The perseverance of the saints is not only secured by the power, love and veracity of God, and his promise to the Redeemer; but Christ "ever liveth to make intercession for them." Paul represents Christ as having "entered into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us." In the seventeenth chapter of John we have a specimen of his manner of praying for such as are given to him: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me—keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word." This prayer of Christ is not merely for the saints of one age, but for those of all ages. It was offered for those who are regenerated by the same word in our times. Christians would feel much strengthened did they know that some prophet or apostle, now in heaven, had interceded for their perseverance. They have a greater Intercessor. For want of faith, or because we regard iniquity in our heart, our prayers are not always heard. Not so with Christ. He said to the Father, "I knew that thou hearest me always." If this prayer is heard, saints do not fall from grace.

X. *The denial of saints' perseverance is a reflection on the Divine character.* It is denying that God perseveres in his own work. The Bible teaches that the salvation

of men is the work of God, very important, carried on at great expense, and in several steps of progress. They are foreknown, predestinated, given to Christ, an atonement is made for them, and they are regenerated. After carrying them on thus far, will God stop his work, leave them to themselves, and suffer them to perish?

It is a reflection on human character that men often expend great sums on a house, canal or railroad, and then leave it half done. Is a doctrine which makes God do this same thing a less reflection on the Divine character? God has made a great many promises that they who are chosen in Christ, given to him, redeemed, and believe on him, shall be saved. It is almost blasphemous to suppose that God will fail to keep these promises. The Word of God makes a great account of regeneration, connecting it with the favor of God, in time and eternity. If, after all, it has not brought the regenerated on to any such safe ground, but that which will leave them to fall and perish, surely too much is made of it. If, when I pray for a man's conversion, I pray for that which he may lose the first time he sins, I pray for that which is of little worth. But if it will secure heaven, it is as important as represented in the Bible. Such is our depravity, such are the allurements of sin, and such are the temptations of Satan, that if the notion of falling from grace is true, what probability is there that any of us will be saved?

Some years since I lost a brother, who was converted in early youth. In his family, in the Sabbath-school, in the prayer-meeting, in the church, and in public and private life, he everywhere evinced that he was born of God. I have hardly the shadow of a doubt that he was a Christian. Death overtook him away from home, and his last days were spent among the adherents of the Man of Sin. Though he was evidently a Christian nearly forty years,

yet if men fall from grace, I cannot be at all confident that he is in heaven. For who can tell what Rome and the Tempter might do, when his mind became weakened by disease?

"That a man should be a child of God to-day, and a child of hell to-morrow, seems utterly incredible. That his name should be written in the book of life this week, and blotted out the next, then re-written, and again expunged, till the sacred page, it may be, is blurred from top to bottom, looks in the highest degree improbable. That a man should by faith be incorporated into the body of Christ as a living member, and then be wholly and incurably cut off, exceeds all bounds of reasonable belief. Christ, the Head, will not suffer his own limbs to be torn from him, and his mystical body to be maimed, scarred, mangled, and curtailed of its fair proportions to all eternity. That the devil should be able to pluck one of Christ's own sheep out of his hands, and thus insult and rob and triumph over the Great Shepherd, is an abhorrent thought. That angels should rejoice over a penitent, who shall yet deeply disappoint and mortify them by his apostasy, is to paint them in a very precarious heaven."

XI. *The sins of saints.* Here, if anywhere, we might expect proof of their falling from grace. "Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." None but perfectionists believe that Christians live in this world without sin. What, then, does the passage mean? It means that the sins of saints are not of the kind or degree which will end in final apostasy. "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Paul says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able,

but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The sins of Moses, Eli, David and Peter, though very great, had something about them very different from the things about the sins of Saul, Ahab and Judas, who never had any real religion. The Bible is particular to assert that they who finally fall away were never saints. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." 1 John ii. 19. The Bible makes it clear that apostates did not set out with the grace of those who persevere. They at the outset built their "house upon the sand;" had not "deepness of earth;" had "no root;" had "no oil in their vessels;" "were not of us," and put their "hand to the plough and looked back."

XII. *Regeneration is security for salvation.* "It is God who has sealed us and given us the earnest of His spirit in our hearts." Sealing anciently made a door or contract secure. Earnest-money was that which was advanced to close the bargain, or as a pledge that the sum agreed on should be paid. Peter says, "Being born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." This shows us that something comes in connection with the new birth "which liveth and abideth for ever—that the spiritual as well as the natural birth produces that which will never perish." "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Their spiritual life is a treasure, safely entrusted, or deposited for safe-keeping, with Christ. If left in their own hands, they would lose it, spend it, or fall from it. Will a pearl hid with Christ, as Peter says the life of a Christian is, ever be lost?

The jailor asked, "What shall I do to be saved?"

The inspired prisoner replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt* be saved." Christ says, "He that believeth and is baptized *shall* be saved." If these passages state a fact, it will be disputing Paul and Christ to hold that believers, instead of being saved, may fall from grace and be lost. If Christians fall from grace, believing or being regenerated does not warrant salvation; for the jailor might, the next day, fall and be lost, instead of being saved. These promises are made to the saints. Christ "shall confirm you unto the end. When Christ shall appear, then shall ye appear with Him in glory."

XIII. *Divine Providence is also security for the salvation of saints.*

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." "All things work together for good to those that love God." "I will never leave nor forsake thee." "God worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure." The biography of pious men abundantly proves that Providence secures their perseverance. When David fell into sin, Providence provided a Nathan and a pestilence to prevent his final apostasy. When Peter denied his Master, the crowing of a cock and a significant look were prepared to send him out weeping; and when Paul was in danger of being lifted up with pride, a thorn was sent to remedy the evil. The experience of every aged saint will point out instances where Providence has stepped in and prevented his fatally falling.

XIV. *The course of the Christian is onward and upward.* This is the opposite of stopping and falling. The work of man is often retrograde; that of God is advancing. Sanctification is peculiarly the work of God, which he will perform until the day of Jesus Christ. The Apostle, by placing every piece of Christian armor in front, shows that the course of the Christian is onward. If the notion of falling from grace had a place in the Bible, some parts

of the armor would be fitted for the back. The Psalmist says, "The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It is not a path that begins with noonday brightness and ends with midnight. It begins like daybreak, and shines more and more till full daylight. We read in other places, "They go from strength to strength." "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." "The Lord forsaketh not his saints, but preserveth them for ever." How differently would these passages read if saints were liable to fall from grace, instead of pursuing a course which is onward and upward!

I have proved the perseverance of the saints by the silence of the Bible on being born the third time—by its nowhere expressing joy that any died before they fell from grace—by its silence as to a purgatory for the fallen—the repentance of a sinner creating joy in heaven—full assurance of hope—the attributes of God—election and predestination—the promise in the covenant of redemption—intercession of Christ—denial of perseverance a reflection on the divine character—the sins of saints—regeneration security for salvation—Providence security for salvation—and by the fact that the course of the Christian is onward. If any reader has a doubt on the subject, let these fourteen arguments go for nothing, and I will give to you five passages of Scripture which will perfectly prove the doctrine:

1. Peter says, 1 Peter i. 5: They who are "begotten of God *are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*" Not by the power of *man* and through *works*, but by the power of *God* and through *faith*. The pas-

sage contains no parable or figure to show that saints are not kept just as the Apostle Peter says they are.

2. Christ says, John v. 42: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." Is it possible for him to fall from grace who already *hath* everlasting life, and *shall not* come into condemnation?

3. Luke x. 24: "But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall *never* be taken away." What did she choose? Religion, or the grace of God, which will never be taken from one who chooses it.

4. The fourth chapter of John mentions a woman who came to a well to draw water. Christ said, "Whosoever drinketh of *this* water, shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall *never* thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," or, as it might be rendered, a spring boiling up for ever. After drinking the water from Jacob's well, a man will thirst again; but he who receives the grace of God will *never* thirst. Real religion is a spring in the soul which will never run dry. This makes it certain that whoever receives the grace of Christ will never fall.

5. Philippians i. 6: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." This *good work* was the work of grace, begun in Christians at conversion, and Paul was confident of the *very thing* of their perseverance till the day of Jesus Christ.

I would be glad to hear any one, who disbelieves this doctrine, attempt to express it more clearly or more strongly than it is expressed by these five texts. If they absolutely *prove* it, there should be no attempts to prop up falling from grace by arguments drawn from im-

plications, inferences, and warnings against apostasy. Arminians do not pretend to offer *direct* proof; but these passages *directly* declare that saints "*are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*"—*that the believer* "*hath* everlasting life and *shall not* come into condemnation"—that the "good part shall *never* be taken away"—that they who drink the grace which Christ gives "shall *never thirst*"—and that God will perform the good work which he has begun in saints until the day of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION.

1. If saints fall from grace on earth, they will fall in heaven.

The reasoning which will explain away hell, carried out, will explain away heaven. That which will prove that all go to heaven will prove that none go there. The logic which will explain away these five texts, and prove that saints fall from grace on earth, will prove that they will do the same in heaven. The passages which prove the perseverance of the saints on earth are more numerous, plain and direct than those which pledge their continuance in heaven. Let men beware how they adopt interpretations which will open heaven to falling from grace.

2. It is to be regretted that a doctrine so well sustained by Scripture, and so important, should not find a place in the creeds of all bodies organizing under orthodox names.

3. Beware of counterfeits in religion. Religious emotions, which are as the morning cloud and early dew, have given rise to the notion of falling from grace. Men fall from excitement, enthusiasm and mystic frames, and think they fall from what they never had—real religion.

4. Our subject teaches the value of regeneration and

the faithfulness of God. These, and not we, secure the perseverance of the saints. They warrant it. All should expect to fall who rely on their own, instead of the faithfulness of God.

5. We should ourselves persevere. We should be coworkers with God in our salvation till the work is done. He will best work out his own salvation who feels that God worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He who most relies on God to do the work will toil most faithfully to do it himself.

No. 309.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

"So shall he sprinkle many nations."

Introduction.—If Baptism in English and Greek means only Immersion, how is it that men like Moses Stuart, Robinson, Barnes, Rice, Hodge, Stowe, in this country, and Chalmers, Scott, Henry, Baxter and Doddridge of Europe, have not been believers in Immersion? Are our Baptist brethren better Greek scholars than these men? More than nine-tenths of the learned are not Baptists. Are they all hypocrites? Or possibly does Baptism mean something else than Immersion? The Bible must decide, you say. Certainly. How, then, do you account for it, in the

1*st place, that there is not one clear case of Baptism by Immersion in the whole Bible?* Point to one if you can. Do you cite the baptism of Jesus? Turn to it. We read in Matthew iii. 16, "And Jesus when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water." Is it here said that he went entirely under the water? Does it say he went in knee-deep? If Jesus had stepped into Jordan knee-deep, or ankle-deep, and John, stooping, had taken up water in his hand to pour on his head, would not the language be just as it is in Matthew iii. 16? Look into books on the catacombs of Rome, where the early Christians worshipped under ground in the days of Nero who slew Paul, and you will find a picture of the baptism of Jesus made by these early Christians on the wall. Christ stands in the water, and John with his hand puts water on the head of Jesus.

Will you cite Romans vi. 4, as a clear case?—"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Our burial has a faint resemblance to immersion—though we pour the earth upon the body, never dipping the body into the earth. Do you know how the Romans buried, to whom Paul speaks? They burned their dead, and put the ashes in an urn into the sepulchre. Was that like immersion? How did the Jews bury? In caves and rocks, not in the ground. Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah, and Lazarus in the rock. How was Christ buried?

In a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, his body carried on the shoulders of men, and laid on a niche in the wall. If four men took you up, carried you into a room, and laid you on a sofa, would you see in that any likeness to immersion? So Christ was buried. There is no more resemblance in baptism to the burial of Christ than to his crucifixion, spoken of in the next verses: this verse means, that as Christ died, so we by baptism, confessing him, die to the world, and as Christ rose again, so we walk in a new life. There is no reference at all to the *mode* of baptism.

Try again. Do you cite Ephesians iv. 5?—"One Lord—one faith—one baptism." One act of baptism. We are to be baptized once. Does it say by immersion?

Do you fall back on the baptism of the Eunuch? Read the account in Acts viii. 36 and 38: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the Eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the Eunuch saw him no more." Did Philip, who also went into the water, immerse himself? Both went in. If going in proves immersion, both were immersed. How deep did they go in? Can you prove that they went in knee-deep? What river was it? There is only one river in Palestine, the Jordan, which is but thirty yards wide. They were in the way "from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert" (verse 26). There is no river between the two cities; only at intervals a trickling spring; water is scarce, the inhabitants drink from cisterns. If, coming to a rivulet crossing the road, they had left the chariot, stepped into the rivulet or into a pool fed by it, and Philip, taking up water in his hand, had put it on the Eunuch's head, would not the occurrence be described just as it is in these verses? Tradition still points out the spring where the incident transpired. The Eunuch had been reading Isaiah, and he quotes (Acts viii. 32) from Isaiah liii. 7: "The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth." If you will turn to the passage in Isaiah liii. 7, and look just eight verses before, Isaiah

lii. 15, in the same description of Christ you will read, "So shall he *sprinkle* many nations." That suggests baptism by sprinkling.

These are the strongest passages the immersers have. How do you account for it that there is not one clear case of baptism by immersion in the Bible?

II. *If I can find in the Bible one clear case of baptism which is not Immersion, then the immersers are proved to be in the wrong.* For they claim that baptism only and always means immersion. Suppose we try. Read Mark vii. 4: "And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, and brazen vessels and tables." Opening my Greek Testament at this verse, I find the word translated "*wash*" is "*baptisontai*," *baptize*. "Except they baptize, they eat not." Whenever "the Pharisees and all the Jews" came from market, did they immerse themselves before they ate? We know their custom. A servant poured water on their hands; this Mark calls baptizing. Reading on in the Greek, the word "washing," I find, is "*baptismous*," "the baptism of cups, pots, brazen vessels and tables." Did the Jewish women immerse their tables every day, or pour on a little water and wash them? Here, then, the Bible calls that baptism which cannot be immersion.

Again we read in First Corinthians x. 2: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." The Jews were all baptized in the Red Sea, it seems. How was it done? We are told in Exodus xiv. 19, as they stood by the Red Sea, "the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them." The wall of water was not on each side of them, and the cloud over them, in crossing—as Baptists often assert. The pillar of cloud went from front to rear as they stood on the shore (Psalm lxxvii. 17): "the clouds poured out water," says the Psalmist sketching the scene—sprinkling them, "baptizing them unto Moses in the cloud." Then, Exodus xiv. 22: "The waters were divided, and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on the

left." The Jews marched through the sea upon dry ground, the strong east wind sprinkling them with spray, and "baptizing them unto Moses in the sea." The Jews then were baptized, like Presbyterians, on dry ground, by sprinkling. They were baptized, but not immersed. Now read what is said of the Egyptians, Exodus xv. 10: "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters." The Egyptians were immersed. In the case of three million Jews, we have a second example of Bible-baptism, which cannot be immersion.

In Matthew iii. 11, John prophesied of Christ: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Jesus repeats the promise, Acts i. 5: "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The prediction was fulfilled in Acts ii. 3: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." A cloven tongue, a drop of fire, sprinkled each head. Here was the promised baptism of fire. Did you ever read that they were immersed in fire? I admit there is one clear case of such immersion. The Sodomites were immersed in the fiery lake of the Dead Sea, but it is not said that they were baptized. If in the Bible there can be found one clear case of baptism which is *not* immersion, then the dippers are beaten. Here are three such examples. Many others are behind.

Conclusion: In First Peter iii. 20 we read that "God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," *i. e.*, Christ is the ark into which we enter by faith that is professed at baptism. At baptism the Christian is likened to Noah. Noah "was saved by water." But it was by carefully keeping out of it. Noah was sprinkled. The Antediluvians were immersed.

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PARSONAGES:

WHY SHOULD THEY BE PROVIDED?

The question whether it is desirable to provide parsonages, or manses, to use the Scotch term, for the pastors of our churches is now widely agitated. That it is desirable we believe, and for the reasons which we here submit:

First. For the convenience both of pastor and people. The residence of the pastor could thus be secured by the people just where it should be, in the place most convenient both for him and for them; not far, on the one hand, from the sanctuary in which he is to minister, yet as central as may be, on the other hand, to the dwellings he is to visit.

This desirable location of the pastor's home is often impossible where there is no choice but such a house as either he or the people can *hire* from year to year. The very necessities of such dependence often oblige the minister either to occupy some house very inconvenient and unsuitable in itself, or one very far both from his church and his pastoral work.

Beside this convenience in locating a pastor, the

parsonage is found to be no less so in calling and settling one.

The want of such a certain home is often most seriously felt when a pastor-elect is about to enter upon his work. A suitable house must be had, but it cannot, perhaps, be found. In many of our growing settlements, especially in the West, where houses cannot be built fast enough for the incoming population, there are times when it is impossible to find a vacant one.

Delay is thus caused in the settlement of the minister's family, resulting in great inconvenience and discomfort both to him and to them.

Instances are not rare where the settlement has been seriously threatened, the pastor having become weary with his unsettled state, boarding here and there among his parishioners, while his family are obliged to remain away, either in the former parish or among their relatives. In some cases this delay has actually resulted in the breaking up of relations that at first promised great usefulness, but which, had there been a parsonage in readiness at the time of the call, would have been matured and made permanent.

Moreover, it is no small attraction to a minister, on receiving a call, to be informed that a comfortable home, conveniently located, awaits himself and family, should they be pleased to occupy it. In some instances, where that parsonage has not only been put in neat repair, and made thoroughly and attractively ready, but to some extent furnished with such comforts as the coming occupants would at once need, the pastor-elect has been so pleasantly impressed as not

only to be made immediately to feel *at home* among his new people, but also to be most pleasantly confirmed in his purpose, before formed, to give to such a people the best service in his power.

How evident that a home of this kind among any people, but especially among such a people, would be a very great convenience both to him and to them!

Second. Another consideration in favor of a parsonage is the *pecuniary advantage and comfort to the minister.*

In no way can a people, with the same outlay, contribute so much to the minister's comfortable support as in providing for him and his family such a home. When once built or bought, the repairs and taxes will be but little to them, but the relief very much to him. Rent is always a large item of expense, far larger than most ministers feel able to pay. And rent-day comes painfully often. In many cases that day is a cloud over the whole quarter, which not only darkens but chills. The forecasting and saving necessary to make this one large payment often cause more anxiety and vexation of spirit than any other connected with his living.

In this, it is true, the minister may be but sharing in the inconveniences and vexations of many of his people; and it is also true that he will submit to this with full as much patience and cheerfulness as they. Nevertheless, it is a discomfort and a distraction to which he need not be subjected among any people able to build a church and support a pastor. If he need not, then he ought not to be thus burdened, for by all such needless troubles he is in a measure

unfitted for the best performance of those duties to discharge which require an unvexed mind.

Besides the rent, there is another evil connected with a hired house, which is still more serious. While in such a house the minister is subject to all the uncertainties and liabilities of tenants. If good houses are in great demand, the rent will be most inconveniently and oppressively advanced—a demand which is too seldom met by a corresponding increase of salary. Or, if the rent be not advanced, the property may at any time change hands, and so call for an unexpected and trying removal of the occupant. We have known ministers seriously annoyed and perplexed by this necessity. One within our knowledge was obliged thus to move three times within two years. Now, when we take into account the wear and tear, the breakage and the losses, as well as the cash expense in various ways, of such removals, to say nothing of the time consumed and the trouble and toil involved, we are fully persuaded that there would be a great advantage in many ways, to both pastor and people, if he could be spared these vexations and expenses by the occupation of a comfortable parsonage.

Third. Another consideration in favor of a parsonage is the advantage to the minister and his family *in giving them a home.*

This joy—the possession of a home—comes from the certainty of a fixed habitation during at least the period of his settlement. It is well known that modern ministerial settlements, to an extent much too great, afford but little opportunity for cultivating the home feeling, that love of place and its surroundings

and associaations which is of itself such a charm both of family union and joy.

Ministers, as much as their people, would like to cultivate and enjoy this peculiar pleasure. But the absence of it, to a great extent, is one of the incidents of their calling. It is one of the crosses which must be taken up and borne by all contemplating life in the ministry, that the calling is a *homeless* one. Their "settlement on wheels" (so called from its frequent changes) keeps up to such an extent a wandering life that the heart of both parent and child has but little opportunity of attachment to a particular home. Emphatically they are "pilgrims"—too often they are "strangers" also.

This evil seems in these days inseparable from the calling. All the more, perhaps, on that very account do ministers deplore it. Especially is this felt when, in addition to the necessary change of home involved in a change of pastorate, there is superadded the changes required by removal from one hired house to another. This aggravates the evil, already too great.

Ought this so to be? Is it not *due* to the ministry, who sacrifice so much of home comfort, that the people to whom they minister should, as far as possible, mitigate this evil? This they can easily do, not only by discouraging short pastorates, but also by providing for the pastor while with them a fixed abode. This in most cases can be best accomplished by a *parsonage* —one worthy to be their minister's home. Under such a roof, provided by an appreciative people, and within enclosures cared for by those studious of their minister's comfort, there would be some opportunity for the growth of the *home feeling*.

The importance of this home feeling in the minister, and of the cultivation of it by the people, is too frequently overlooked. It is not only most comforting to the minister and his family, but it is eminently calculated to act favorably on the happiness and continuance of the pastorate. It is but a part of the human nature, which ministers inherit with all men, that they should love a people better who seek to make them *feel at home.*

Fourth. Hence we urge *its religious advantage to the parish.*

By the home thus provided a more settled feeling is produced, and the interest of minister and people in each other is sensibly increased. All the contributors to the parsonage become thereby more interested not only in it, but also in its occupant. This interest increases as time gathers around the minister's home the associations of years, hallowing the spot with pleasant and venerable memories. Let a generation or generations of children grow up to regard it as the minister's home; let the people come annually through all that time to that one place for a social interview with their pastor and his family; let old and young thus come together with or without gifts, but always with their congratulations and such expressions of their interest in the comfort and welfare of their spiritual leaders and guides as their hearts might prompt; let them also, from time to time, through all their life, come to that one central place of the parish, with such heart-burdens, either of joy or sorrow, as find sweet relief when communicated to a sympathizing pastor or his wife, and how natural, nay, inevitable, that the very place would become

more and more dear to the people as, in the course of years and generations, there were clustered around and within it these tender associations.

It is for such reasons as these that the old parsonages of New England and manses of Scotland became such hallowed spots. If to our fathers the sanctuary was the *home of God* among their dwellings, the parsonage was the home of the *man of God*, who represented God among them. Thus to them, in a double sense, religion became domesticated among them. And thus would religion become *more and more at home* among *any* people.

There is a natural affinity, we believe, between permanent homes, or parsonages, and long, or, life pastorates. They grow up naturally together. And we believe if the churches would as uniformly provide a suitable home for their minister as they do a house for God, that the minister would be far more likely to feel at home with them and remain among them.

Thus the tendency would be to prolong ministerial settlements, a result which would be most happy in its influence both over the ministry and the churches.

Of course, in this presentation of the claims of the parsonage upon the favor of all our churches, we are advocating *the right kind* of a parsonage. It should not be the meanest and oldest building, in some out-of-the-way place. It should not be the house which can be bought for the least money: such a home would be a reproach to the parish, and conduce neither to the comfort nor contentment of the minister. It should be such a home as will correspond to

the purpose to which it is to be put, and be a credit alike to the ability, the generosity and the piety of the church. It should be respectable in its outward appearance, comfortable in its completeness, generously commodious in its size, and convenient in its location. Such a home as will avoid the appearance of extravagance on the one hand, and of penuriousness on the other; it will be a home that the occupants will have a pride in keeping neat, and one into which the people, rich and poor, will feel alike ready to enter, and which all will be glad to call *their minister's home.*

This is the kind of home we advocate for the pastor —*such a home as the average of the better class of the people to whom he ministers would build for themselves.*

Then let this home, both house and surroundings, be kept sound and in good repair. Let it also be gladdened, on occasions, by the presence of a loving and generous people. It needs no prophet's gift to predict that such a parsonage would be found to be, in proportion to the outlay required, the most comfort-giving and profitable investment in the parish.

We are aware of the popular objections which are sometimes urged against parsonages. But we are also aware that those objections have mainly grown out of *poor* parsonages, and parsonages miserably *neglected,* but parsonages, nevertheless, in which the minister was expected to live, whilst in them he could not possibly be comfortable in fact, nor respectable in appearance.

These objections to parsonages we have not deemed it necessary to answer; they would have no weight whatever were the good old plan of buying or

building, and keeping in good repair a suitable home for the pastor, sufficiently tested by the churches to prove its beneficent results.

Reason, observation and experience alike confirm us in the belief that to provide such a home for the minister is the true policy of the churches.

PREACHING AND HEARING.

THERE are two sets of admonitions in the Bible—one addressed to those who preach the gospel, the other to those who hear it. These admonitions intimate that both parties are under great religious responsibility, that both are liable to come short in their duties, and that God, in his care of the Church, is constantly observant of their ways. The message to Archippus, bidding him take heed to the ministry which he had received of the Lord, and the charge of Christ to his disciples to take heed how they should hear, are examples of these inspired admonitions.

Preaching and hearing are reciprocal acts. Each supplements and completes the other. The ministers of Christ are charged with one of these duties: they are to be preachers of the Word. The people are entrusted with the other: they are to be hearers of the Word. And on the proper performance of these two acts—that is to say, on the right kind of preaching in our pulpits, and the right kind of hearing in our pews—more than on all other instrumentalities in use in the Church, depends the success of the gospel, the conversion of sinners, the edification of saints, the upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ.

If it be said that the Holy Spirit is needed to give effect to divine truth, we must not only admit, but

greatly emphasize the assertion. It would be difficult, however, to conceive what more the Holy Spirit does, or needs to do, to make the truth effectual, than to secure for it a proper administration on the part of those who preach, and a proper reception on the part of those who hear. When the sower in the parable cast good seed into good ground, nothing more was necessary to ensure the harvest. The mighty working of the Spirit is indispensable to the success of the gospel, for this reason, if no other, that only by his powerful operation in preachers and hearers, will the Word be rightfully dispensed by the one or savingly received by the other. But when by his aid the heavenly message becomes an ingrafted word, we have the best authority for saying that that has power to save the soul. Preachers and hearers have need of the Holy Spirit to enable them to do what they have to do in a way to please God. But when by his assistance the one offer good ground to the good seed, and the other cast good seed into good ground, the conditions of a fruitful gospel are fully met.

Let it be noted, however, that it is not right preaching and wrong hearing, nor right hearing and wrong preaching, that secures the triumph of the Word. However the minister may take heed to his ministry, his messages will never profit till they are mixed with faith in them who hear. And however meekly a people may listen, they will never grow till they get the sincere milk of the Word. Right preaching will do good when it is responded to by right hearing; and right hearing will profit when it is nourished and invigorated by right preaching. Hence the twofold caution of Scripture, which says to those who minister,

Take heed how ye preach; and to those who attend on the ministering, Take heed how ye hear.

It should be remembered, moreover, that no excess of one of these acts can make amends for defects in the other. Sowing more seed, or sowing oftener, necessitates no harvest on the stony ground. Nor will a second ploughing supply corn to the unplanted field. Good preaching is well, but it is no antidote for poor hearing. Good hearing is well, but it is no recompense for poor preaching. When the pew does not receive the Word as it ought, there is no remedy in the pulpit. Nor is there any corrective in the pew when the pulpit comes short of its task. Good preaching is good preaching—that and nothing more. Good hearing is only good hearing. Neither is the other, or the other's equivalent. We must have both, or our gospel is shorn of its saving power.

What an immense responsibility does this interdependence of preachers and hearers devolve upon each with respect to the other! The holiest minister of Christ is impotent to do his work alone. The best congregation is without power to sanctify itself. By bad hearing a people may bring to naught the most faultless ministry, and a minister by bad preaching may starve the flock that come to his fold to be fed. The Christian ages are full of instances in which heedless congregations have disabled their pastors, and careless pastors caused their congregations to pine. Is it strange that in such conditions our Lord should cause to be published to all the centuries the double message, Let those who preach take heed how they dispense the word, and those who hear, How they receive it?

But if this relation of interdependence, in one view of it, involves immense obligation, in another it imports unspeakable power. Only let preacher and people understand their reciprocal functions, and agree, the one to discourse as well as the others listen, and the others to listen as well as he discourses, and by hearty co-operation they make the gospel quick to awaken and mighty to reclaim. Can we too often repeat to ourselves or others the words that bid preachers take heed to their ministry, and those who hear, to their hearing?

What is right preaching, and what right hearing? Obviously, the main implement of the minister is the sermon. With that, more than any and all other means, he is to win success for his Master. Right preaching, then, is the preparation and use of good sermons. Good, I mean, in the sense of the New Testament. And what, in the sense of the New Testament, is a good sermon? First, it is no part of the duty of a Christian minister to make divine truth. He is not an artificer, to fabricate new revelations; nor an explorer, to traverse unknown wastes; but an envoy of the great King, bearing a given message to the people of his charge. Nor is it one of the offices of the Christian preacher, or one of the functions of the gospel sermon, to modify any item of truth found in the Bible. The image of God, truth is as immutable as is its Author. So sacred is it in substance, and so inviolate in form, that whoever changes it an iota converts it at once to a lie. The one use of the gospel sermon is to give exact expression to the truth of Scripture. A Christian discourse is not a prism, nor a lens, nor a stained window, nor a darkened

glass, nor an embroidered veil, nor anything else that colors, clouds or refracts the light of the saving Word. For matter, truth; for style, clearness—these two are indispensable qualities of right preaching.

But while the minister of Christ is to declare the Word, it is not required of him that he shall add to divine truth any element of power which it does not already possess in itself as the Word of God. Unthinking men, observing with pain that the messages of the gospel as set down in the inspired record are impotent to attract, persuade, and take control of the heedless, imagine that in a competent ministry there must lie a power to make amends for the weakness of the Word. That is to say, these shortsighted men, think that we, who are called to preach, can outdo and ought to outdo the Spirit of God in preparing an instrument for the conversion and sanctification of men—that we can make, and ought to make sermons that are more powerful upon the human heart than is the Bible, which is the masterpiece of God himself. But, however prevalent this delusion may be, it is a gross and total mistake. The Bible is God's sermon. If he wanted his truth to be made more attractive, more credible, more constraining, or more authoritative than it is in the volume which his Spirit has prepared, he would never resort to his ministers for such a service. The Christian sermon does not give verity, force or effect to divine truth. Divine truth lends to the sermon these high qualities. Otherwise, it would be the reflector that casts light upon the sun, and not the sun that casts light on the reflector

We have, then, the New Testament idea of good preaching. The minister of Christ is a sower. His

Bible is his sack of sifted seed. His congregation is his field. And the work assigned to him is to cast forth upon every handbreadth of the ground, upon headland and thicket, upon stony places and the fertile soil, the good seed of the Word of God. What shall become of that seed—whether the birds shall devour, the sun consume, the thorns obstruct it, or whether, rooted in the loam, it shall yield to the garner a hundred-fold in the day of harvest—all such questions, as they depend neither upon the seed sown nor the manner of sowing, must be committed to the decision of other causes. The sower has done his work, done it well, and satisfied every exaction of his Lord, when he has strewn the field with the seed of truth. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore, hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

What kind of hearing now supplements and completes this style of preaching? That is to say, what, in the New Testament sense of the term, is right hearing of the Word of God? Evidently, it is a kind of hearing that requires only the plain presentation of divine truth to make that truth quick and powerful. All that the well-prepared soil needs in order to produce the certain harvest is that the sower should cast in the good seed. All that the waiting

stock demands in order to the growth of the desired fruit, is, that the gardener should insert the ingrafted scion. Right hearing of the Word is hearing with a soul ready not only to receive, but also to obey the heavenly message. It was with this understanding of the case that Christ once said, "The day cometh when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live." The word becomes life to him who hears it aright, as said the Saviour on another occasion, "My words are spirit and they are life." Isaiah had the same view of the matter when he called to men far off in gospel times, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." This is the test of right hearing. Whoever listens to the Word of God, and does not receive it into a good and honest heart—so receive it that, instead of perishing or falling idly into the caverns of memory, it takes instant root and shows itself as a vital force in character—exposes himself to that admonition which says, Take heed how ye hear.

We have seen what the Bible means by proper preaching and proper hearing. *Which is the more difficult habit to attain?* And if the Church is to dispense with either, which could she better put aside and lose?

It is no doubt a very arduous and difficult thing for a minister of Christ to concentrate all his powers, day after day, and year after year, upon the one task of drawing forth and declaring to his people the truths of the Bible. To equip himself for the successful study of the Testaments, making Hebrew roots and Greek particles familiar to him as household words, to master all the attitudes, tones and idioms of effect-

ive speech, to compass the difficult art of right arrangement, and, with these secondary but indispensable appliances, to keep his soul so in sympathy with Christ, so in harmony with his gospel, so in love with men, so gentle, so teachable, so plastic to heavenly influences, so patient, so tireless, so full of the Holy Ghost, that truth shall get competent expression in his ministry,—Nobody who has made experiment of the work will believe that to serve in holy things is an office of ease. But I am not ready to aver that, as respects the preparation of the heart—not to say of the intellect also—to become a good hearer of the Word is in any case a less arduous undertaking. In yonder barn, hid in the unwinnowed sheaves, lies a supply of good seed. On the plain outside, acres of fallow ground wait to be furrowed and got ready for sowing. Will he who puts that field in order for the sower need less vigilance, purpose or labor than he who gets that seed in order for the ground? Let any mother, chased through the day with household cares, to whom tranquillity is as rare as rest, whose slumbers are only the echo in her dreams of the day's vexations, try to soothe her soul into such susceptibility to things divine that chapter and hymn, sermon and lecture, and every accession and every remembrance of the Word of God shall accomplish its mission, and bring forth in her thirty, sixty or a hundred-fold of the fruits of righteousness and joy. Let the lawyer, the doctor, the student, the man of business, undertake in earnest to rid their hearts of every habit and mood that opposes the action of the Word of God, and offer to that Word, each day and hour, no stony ground or hard-beaten path, or place of thorns, but only the mellow soil in

which Christian virtue can grow; and whoever brings to the house of the Lord a heart so kept may be sure that the week which has witnessed the toils of his pastor has not seen lesser toils in himself.

As to the comparative worth of these two modes of preparation, we all know that well-prepared ground, though it have little seed, will yield a larger harvest than the neglected field upon which the sower strews with a lavish hand. If our churches must submit to the alternative of negligent pulpits or inattentive pews, religion will prosper better when good hearers listen to poor preaching than when poor hearers doze under perfect sermons. We cannot safely hazard either experiment. Why should we try to graft living scions into dying trees, or dying scions into living trees? What we want is a saving and efficacious gospel, in order to which we must have such preaching as the Saviour enjoins, and to match it, a kind of hearing that, as at Pentecost, gives the Word lodgment and success. But if, through the great displeasure of God, we must be cursed with blight on one or the other of these agencies, by all means let it fall on the pulpit. For nothing can more certainly ensure universal death than an insensate and inattentive pew.

Has the public, and especially the Christian conscience, been rightly educated on this subject during the last half century? Preachers have great responsibilities as the appointed ministers of the word. Do they understand them? Do they know their exact limits? Do they feel profoundly and from day to day the weight of their holy calling? And have the hearers of the Word an equally well-defined, clear, and impressive sense of obligation on their part? I

am seriously apprehensive that there has been grievous inequality in the teaching of modern times as to these matters. Public attention has been so concentrated upon the question of fidelity in the pulpit that the equally important matter of faithfulness in the pew has fallen into unconscious neglect. The consequence is, that we have in our preachers an overwrought and morbid conscience, and in our congregations a conscience torpid and careless and weak. It would be difficult to find in any pulpit in our Church a respectable minister of Christ who does not make it the foremost care of the week, giving to it not his labors only, but his supplications also, to prepare himself for his responsible work of preaching the Word. But does any intelligent observer believe that any very large part of the members—I will not say of our congregations, but of our churches even—have it as an equally definite and serious care to prepare themselves during the week for a profitable hearing of the Word on the Sabbath? Is there a congregation in our entire body whose members, calling a pastor, would stipulate with him that he might regulate all his responsibility as a preacher by the manner in which they treated theirs as hearers of the Word? We have educated and developed the conscience of the pulpit; we have neglected and stupefied the conscience of the pew.

Let us set up an imaginary school, modeled on the plan of the modern religious assembly. The teacher is capable, self-sacrificing and thoroughly in earnest. The pupils are numerous, respectful and in their places day by day. But the old doctrine, that education requires the joint endeavors of pupil and teacher —the one to communicate the other to apprehend

knowledge—is discarded; and in place of it a theory is set up that merges all responsibility and all efficiency in the mind that instructs. The scholars are to have no lessons, to pursue no studies, to make no recitations, but simply to assemble in the school-room, and expose themselves to erudition, as if it were a contagion to be caught from the air. Soliloquizing his knowledge, the teacher is somehow to inject it into the heads of the listless and passive crowd. A few weeks elapse, and one and another parent, discovering that his sons are learning nothing, takes fright and begins to complain of the teacher. Others catch the word, and dissatisfaction grows wide and intense. The teacher, victim of the same delusion that leads astray the parent, afflicts himself in secret; and though he cannot see what he could do other or better than he has done, accepts the guilt of failure, and surrenders his charge to some more confident adventurer, who has, or thinks he has, the magic art of educating passive and unstudious souls. What is the matter in this imaginary school? There is a mistake somewhere. Where and what is it? Why it is founded on a false theory—viz., that with passive pupils an active teacher can communicate and implant knowledge. What is the remedy? To chide and change instructors? No, but to set the pupils to their neglected tasks, and so soon as they are as eager to acquire as their teacher is to communicate, and as assiduous in study as he is in instruction, the needed change will appear. Intellect will expand, knowledge increase, education prosper.

Let us write anew the parable of the sower, suiting it to the notions of the day: "A sower went forth to sow,

and some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, and when the sun arose they were scorched, and, because they had no root, withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. Then came the owner of the field unto him, and said, O thou wicked and slothful servant! It is through thy lack of faithful sowing that the wayside hath refused its harvest, and the stony place is yielding no grain. And the sower answered, Lord, I am guilty as thou sayest; dismiss thy impotent servant, and send to the field one who can so thrust in the grain that under it the rock shall dissolve, the wayside soften, the bird depart, the thorn decay, and the state of the soil have no more power to lessen the sheaf in the harvest."

I have sketched in these two pictures what I believe to be the attitude of the general conscience as to the comparative responsibilities of preachers and hearers. A hundred devoted and faithful ministers are weeping in secret places to-day over their imagined guilt, in that they do not, by casting on the wayside the good seed of the Word, furrow it into mellow mould, and do what is impossible. And a hundred congregations, content with passive hearing, are at their ease to-day, because they have cast upon their pastors the total responsibility of success or failure in their work.

We are surprised that in so many evangelical pulpits, pyrotechnics are taking the place of truth, and sensation becoming the law of the sermon. No result could more legitimately follow the theory that the pulpit is a battery with which to charge and mag-

netize a passive congregation. When the priests of Baal regarded it as part of their function to compel their god to hear, and he would not listen to their gentler calls, they leaped upon the altar; they cut themselves with knives; they made frantic gestures, tried the virtues and proved the weakness of sensation. What else can the ministers of Christ do when in their delusion they mistake their office, and think to get an answer from the sepulchre by knocking loudly at the door?

Nothing, it seems to me, is more needed in our churches, *than a better development of the common conscience touching the respective responsibilities of those who preach and those who hear the gospel.* God forbid that I should detract an iota from the measure of a pastor's obligations as they are set down in the infallible word of Scripture. But there was a time—and I cannot but remember it—when if God's ministers did not succeed, the reason was said to be, the Word preached was not mixed with faith in them who heard it; and people and pastors were taught to put the responsibility where it belonged. And there was once a man—I cannot but recall it—who, while he deemed himself the least of the apostles and the greatest of sinners, felt authorized, nevertheless, to say to his hearers, that his preaching was a sweet incense to God, even though it might be a savor of death to them.

Let the Christian ministry gird itself with a just sense of its obligations to God and men. But let it not, by giving heed to a mistaken conscience, and assuming the guilt of others, rob itself of all power, and go to its work discouraged, abased and disarmed.

Meanwhile, let there come upon our congregations an equally scriptural sense of the duty of right hearing, so that our well-instructed flocks shall go to sermon and lecture as eager pupils go to their teachers and their schools. When hearing is as intent, as active and as much in earnest as preaching, and preaching as scriptural, as plain and as fully bent on edification as the Saviour enjoins, then will the Word have power, saints grow in grace, sinners receive the Saviour, and history witness what prophecy makes sure, the glorious triumphs of truth in the latter days.

PRESBYTERIANISM

SPECIALLY ADAPTED TO HOME MISSIONS.

HOME MISSIONS are expressly provided for in the polity of the Presbyterian Church, and incorporated in the system. Chapter Eighteenth of the Form of Government is wholly devoted to this subject. According to this Home Missionary chapter, the work consists of two parts:

(1.) Supplying whatever vacancies may exist, and planting new churches wherever needed.

(2.) Providing for the support of the evangelists employed in this work.

The method of proceeding is, first, for the several presbyteries to look after the vacancies in their respective fields, and to plant the new churches needed. Then, secondly, if the work be too great for their individual strength, to seek the needed aid from other portions of the Church.

In practice it has been found, as might be expected in a growing country like ours, that those presbyteries most needing home missionary work are precisely those least able to perform it. Hence, in every period of our Church's history, the cry has come from all the frontier presbyteries, and indeed from many others, for home missionary aid. This cry has come to the General Assembly, the highest judicatory of the

Church, in which all the presbyteries are supposed to be represented, and the aggregate of whose representatives constitutes that Assembly. Hence the natural operation of the system has made the General Assembly a great home missionary council.

That Assembly inquires for the men to perform the home missionary work. The answer to that inquiry leads to the providing of institutions of learning in which the men may be educated and trained, and to securing means by which indigent young men, of suitable character, may be brought into the ministry.

Thus institutions of learning, established and controlled by the Church, and education boards and committees, are means to supply a home missionary want.

Thus, also, publication boards and committees, and the Board of Church Erection, are established to give missionaries greater facilities for usefulness; the former for furnishing them with the various productions of the press, and the latter for providing them with houses of worship—a prerequisite absolutely essential to real, permanent home missionary success.

Finally the Committee of Ministerial Relief takes up the disabled or wornout veterans, who have given their strength to the home missionary service, and makes comfortable their declining years.

Thus the whole active, aggressive polity of the Church is a polity of home missions.

Nor is this any the less true of its judicial and disciplinary functions. The object of these is, in a word, *to keep the Church pure*—to keep out of it, or to weed from it, those who have no sympathy with its great home missionary work.

The polity of the Presbyterian Church is therefore pre-eminently a home missionary polity. The General Assembly is a great home missionary council. Synods, presbyteries and sessions are lesser councils of the same general character.

The peculiar advantage of this polity is ITS COMPLETE ADAPTATION TO THE END.

The end for which the Church is established is to *spread the gospel*—to give all men the opportunity to hear the joyful sound, and to keep urging upon them the offer of that salvation which the gospel has furnished, until it be accepted. The whole Presbyterian system is adapted to this end. It encourages individual effort. It expects each man, as he stands by himself, to keep the fires of devotion burning in his own soul. It expects him in his family to perform the priestly offices of instruction, of sacrifice and of authority. It expects him by his example to preach Christ in his business pursuits and in his social relations.

But as individual exertion and influence are limited by the capacities and opportunities of the individual, and by that knowledge of his character which a few may gain, combination with others becomes needful in order to accomplish what is too much for one alone.

Hence, in the first place, is the *local* church organized by the reception of the doctrine and the polity, and by the choice of the officers required by the general system. That church is living with all the life, efficient with all the efficiency, and strong with all the strength of its component parts. Separately, its several members are daily doing good deeds and exerting a Christian influence. Combined, they weekly,

monthly and yearly do greater deeds and exert a wider influence. These greater deeds and this wider influence are in the same line as the lesser deeds and the narrower influence — the line of spreading the gospel and of establishing and maintaining a controlling religious influence, especially in the communities where the churches are planted.

Following the same general system, we now move forward another step. The local churches in a defined region of country, through their representatives and the ministers of those churches, are combined in a body called a PRESBYTERY. This body, organized according to the rules of the general system, and with the officers therein provided, looks backward to its own constituencies, consulting for their purity and spiritual growth, and forward and around upon those outside of church organizations and controlling Christian influence, and combines and uses for their welfare and salvation the sympathies and activities of all the local churches which it represents.

Thus each presbytery is a perfect home missionary organization. The perfection lies in the completeness of the parts, and in the entire absence of all one-sidedness. On the one hand, it provides for the soundness in the faith, the consistent walk and the full protection in all their spiritual rights of all the members of its local churches; and on the other, for the development of their Christian sympathies, activities and liberality.

Following the same general system, we now advance a step farther. The SYNOD is in its composition a presbytery enlarged, or several presbyteries combined in one. If a presbytery be compared to an army

corps, then the synod is the army, or several corps combined in one. The functions of the synod are those of review and control, of counsel and encouragement. The synod reviews its presbyteries, corrects their mistakes, straightens their crookedness, perfects their counsels, fires their zeal and combines and directs their aggressive powers. If one of its presbyteries be too weak to accomplish a given missionary work, the whole synod may have the requisite strength.

One step more brings us to the consummation of our system—the GENERAL ASSEMBLY. This is a body wholly representative. It possesses all the missionary completeness of the lower bodies, together with a general adaptation peculiarly its own. Coming together, as its members do, from all parts of our great country, they are prepared to give accurate statements respecting the religious condition of their several localities. From the information thus gained the Assembly can so draw out, combine and direct the activities of the entire Church that the wants of every section shall be met.

Thus the Presbyterian Church, taking into view its doctrine and its polity, is in itself a complete missionary system.

Its doctrine is, SPREAD THE GOSPEL—its polity, THE MEANS TO THAT END.

In this combination of polity with doctrine, or of polity as the means of keeping pure and spreading the doctrine, the Presbyterian Church is unrivaled.

With large and influential bodies of religionists in our country the fundamental idea in regard both to polity and doctrine is, *That each local church is a law to itself.* Hence if their doctrine be to spread the

gospel, they find in their polity, the moment they look beyond the local church, no means to that end, and are obliged to invent a system outside of, and in addition to, their own polity, and irresponsible to it. This is the voluntary society system—an invention of man, and for which no pattern was given in the Mount. This system is derogatory to the Head of the Church, since its assumption is that the great King has left his people without the means of obeying his own command. It is a system dangerous to the Church itself, since it leaves the body of Christ liable to be preyed upon by any one who can organize a society for any Christian, or so-called Christian, or for any humanitarian object under the sun. It is a system of street beggary in distinction from that State benevolence which establishes asylums for the insane, for the deaf and dumb and the blind, and county-houses for the poor. It is a system over which the Church can assert no control, and the agents of which she can hold to no account. In a word, it is disuniting what God has joined together. Pity indeed that when our own Church is a missionary system so complete and sufficient, we should divert our sympathies, our energies and our means, to so great an extent, to such a system, and by so doing make our own Church like Samson when Delilah had shorn him of his locks!

Including the Commissioners' Fund, our Church has at this time seven established benevolent causes. The contributions to these objects—allowing $40,000 for church erection, and deducting that amount from the "miscellaneous" column — were, for the year ending April 30, 1868, in round numbers $350,000. While under the head of "miscellaneous"

the amount is $310,000; *i.e.*, for all our regular Church objects we have given only $40,000 more than for those "miscellaneous" objects over which we have as a Church no control, for which we have no special responsibility, and the agents of which we can call to no account. I do not say but what these objects may be good and their agents honest. But I do say we are most supremely unwise thus to travel outside of our own most excellent and complete system, and cast our charities abroad to the four winds. The wonder is this suicidal course has not long since cost us our life.

Presbyterianism is a missionary system. Its doctrine is the heart—its polity the hand.

Now, I assert, with the fullest conviction, that adherence to the faith and polity comprehended in that word Presbyterianism, and described by it, involves and obligates the personal support of it *as a missionary system.* The person who has subscribed to this system of faith and polity has pledged himself to the support of it as a missionary system. Failing to redeem that pledge, or redeeming it partially and with mental reservations, is breaking faith.

Not but that one may aid benevolent causes not named or directly sanctioned by his own Church. Occasions may arise rendering such charities proper and obligatory.

But every member of the Presbyterian Church, who is sincerely and intelligently such, *prefers* her own benevolent causes. To aid them is with him a matter of conscience, of plan and system—just as truly so as the support of his own family. He does not give from mere impulse, but from principle. He regards himself as a living member of a living organization,

and he believes that his life is manifested by bearing fruit.

Our Church is an *organization* for missionary purposes. Now in every material organization, as of a plant, a tree, the human body, the organization is a necessity for the existence of the thing. The materials, the elements which constitute a tree, exist where there is no tree. But when they are combined—*i.e.*, when they are organized—those elements, which before were a law each to itself, come under the general law of organization—the law of growth and mutual support. From henceforth each part, being itself a product of the organization, is bound to be likewise a support thereof. Each branch, twig and leaf is bound to transmit those juices from the earth, and to collect those gases from the atmosphere, which go to make the fruit. Each branch that fails to do this is mercilessly cut off as a disfigurement and a disgrace to the tree, and a hindrance to its fruit-bearing ends.

So in church organization. The end thereof is the spread of the gospel. The motive-power is a heart and will in accordance with that end. That heart and will dwell in separate minds, and each mind in a separate body. But the wills of the separate persons being accordant, their forces are turned by organization in one direction, and are powerful with the aggregation of all their separate powers. That our Church, with her 170,000 members, can give as much for home evangelization as 170,000 individuals, each contributing according to his ability, is a mere truism. But is the motive-power of the Church equal to the aggregate of the individual wills? In the boiler of a locomotive are many separate tubes,

each one of which is a generator of steam. And the power of the boiler is equal to the aggregate of the power of those separate tubes. Our Saviour seems to teach that the power of prayer with God is equal to the aggregate of the desires of the individuals uniting in it: "If two of you shall *agree* on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done," Matt. xviii. 19. The power lies in the *agreement*—in the accordance of the wills. So the motive-power of our Church, marching forth for the evangelization of our country, is equal to the aggregate of the desires of her 170,000 members for that end. If each wished it with all his power of wishing, worked for it with all his power of working, and gave for it with all his power of giving, the onward movement would be irresistible and the crowning victory immediate. But, in point of fact, we move with halting, hesitating steps, and with scarcely motive-power enough to overcome inertia, when we might have momentum sufficient to crush every obstacle and shake the continent. We are like an army, one moiety of which are habitually stragglers, and the other half asleep.

How shall we gain that mighty motive-power of which our organization is capable, and that "esprit de corps" now so sadly wanting? Instrumentally speaking, from two sources especially:

(1.) *The teaching and practice of our ministers.* It is just as much the duty of our ministers to teach their people what our system is, what its capabilities are, and what their obligations are under it, as it is to teach them the Lord's prayer. Yet how little of this is done! A good officer looks after uniform, and drill, and discipline, and fools call him a martinet for his

pains. But in the day of battle that officer's corps is a rock of adamant against an assault, and an avalanche in a charge. Its power to resist or propel is equal to the aggregate of the individual power of all the men in it. Our ministers are inexcusable if they do not teach their congregations what our system is. But, says one, "I don't like to be a *bigot*," and therefore he becomes a *libertine!*

(2.) *Our members must acquaint themselves with our system.* Many of them think far too little of our polity, and do not make adherence to it a matter of conscience. There is indeed some excuse for this, for numbers of them were trained up under other systems, and many have been brought into the Church from the world. This fact should render such members all the more studious of the system. This fact, too, renders instruction on the part of the ministry all the more important, and failure to impart it all the more inexcusable.

It may be added, that this lack of instruction on the part of ministers, and of study on the part of members, arises partly from a widespread impression that *ecclesiastical polity* of any kind is a very small affair. A sentiment as false as falsehood itself. Much of the so-called religion of this day is a curious combination of Quakerism and of what the polite call æsthetics. It despises church forms, discipline and ordinances. It has a special spite against creeds, catechisms and confessions of faith. Yet it is Christian—very, very much so! It likes convocations in which there is artistic music, and short, pithy speeches instead of long-winded sermons; and in which there are prayers infinitesimal in length, but weighty in matter.

This system—rather this want of system—has many mouthpieces in these United States. Such are some of our leading magazines and weekly and daily papers. Such, too, are some of our traveling lecturers, male and female. These advocates of this unbaptized religion are laboring with all subtlety to undermine our Calvinism and our Church polity, and to establish in place thereof a specious humanitarianism without any Christ, or any Bible, save those portions of our precious book which do not make war on their vapid notions.

If I rightly read the signs of the times, there is great danger lest this unbaptized religion come to control and operate some of our voluntary benevolent agencies. And I am fully persuaded we can in no way better guard against its subtle and alarming progress than by adhering steadfastly to our own ecclesiastical system in all its parts, its doctrine and its polity. Why cannot we have the good sense, the honesty and the piety to put our sympathies and our means into our own most excellent system, and thus make it mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds? At present we offer one prayer and pay one dollar for the extension of our own Church, and present one prayer and give one dollar for the extension of Mr. Anybody's Church, and this last is sure to be in competition with ours, and very likely in opposition to it. Thus we build up with one hand and tear down with the other! This senseless course kept us as a Church for twenty-five years pretty much "in statu quo," and had we not some ten years since returned in part to our own system, we should, as a Church, by this time have been nearly or quite

extinct. This return, though only partial, to the common-sense course of working our own system has broken up our stand-still attitude, and stirred into action our dormant life. Could we but be persuaded to return to our own system entirely, we should, under God, work out results inconceivably vast and grand for our country and for our beloved Zion.

This discussion shows the importance of DISCRIMINATION in our charities: (1.) We should discriminate in favor of the benevolent causes of *our own Church*. Even if, in inherent importance and value, outside charities were equal to ours, the fact that our own *are* our own obliges us to their support. We belong to the great Presbyterian Church organization of the country. That organization, in obedience to the constitution imposed upon it by the great Master, and as the necessary outworking of its own interior life, is prosecuting certain great benevolent operations. To the support of those operations every individual member stands pledged. To the extent of his ability, as he himself may judge of that ability, and in such measure to the several causes as their relative importance may demand, he is under obligation to extend his aid, *because they are his own causes*. Had he given his note, secured by a mortgage upon his property, the obligation would not have been more complete. In business transactions those securities—notes and mortgages—are simply the concession of a compulsory process in case the moral obligation be not sufficient. They do not at all create the obligation to pay. They simply give the creditor the power of enforcing, if it be needful, the moral obligation which the promise creates. In the benevolent operations of the Church

there is no such compulsory process. The moral obligation is enforced, not by a mortgage upon property, but by a willing heart, by a well-instructed conscience and by the fear of God.

With an honest man his word is as good as his bond. He may forget, for he is fallible, but he will not repudiate his promise. Now the members of our Church have all promised, either in person or by their representatives in presbytery, in synod and in the Assembly, that they will support the benevolent causes of their own Church. That promise is sacred. But they have not promised to support outside causes—causes unsanctioned by their own Church. And if they do so, and thereby disqualify themselves in whole or in part, from supporting their own cause, it is, to use the mildest language, a very great mistake. I repeat, we are to support our own benevolent causes because they are our own, and because we have pledged ourselves to do so. If two notes are laid before me for payment, to one of which my own name is attached, and to the other the name of a person who has no claim upon me, and for whom I am in no sense and to no extent endorser, my creditor would be apt to think I should discriminate in favor of paying my own note.

I say we should discriminate in favor of our own causes, *even were outside causes inherently equal to them.* But they are not equal. When we aid our own causes we advance the truest system of faith and the truest and best Church polity. When we aid outside causes we do one of three things: Either we help to advance systems less excellent than ours, or systems without any positive, distinctive character—the wish-a-washy, broad-gauge Christianity so much in vogue in our

day—or we aid positive error. A wise and pious man will knowingly do neither of these things.

Besides, our own agencies are known and tried. They are established by ourselves, and all the individuals composing them are held to the strictest responsibility.

But our own causes are not of equal importance. Hence we are to discriminate among them, giving to each according to its relative importance. We consider HOME MISSIONS our chief benevolent work because in conducting them we directly exemplify our own doctrine and carry into effect our own polity. Their pre-eminent importance is determined likewise by their relations to our own country and to the world. We ought to put so much vigor into this work, that we shall not fail to assist every feeble church until it has acquired the capacity for self-support, and to send forth all suitably qualified ministers that can be found to plant and build up new churches in our thousands of new and growing communities. We ought to be able to say to them in the name of the Master and of his Church, Go to this or that needy field and *you shall be sustained.*

While doing this we should impart new vigor to each of our other benevolent causes, doubling or trebling what we are giving for church erection, for ministerial education, for publication and for ministerial relief. The $310,000 which we last year paid to "miscellaneous" causes would go far toward effecting this. Or, without touching that, we might with ease do all we have said. We need to give *more.* We especially need to give MORE WISELY.

THE CHRISTIAN GIVER.

"I WISH *to give until I feel it,*" said an earnest Christian man, some years ago, in response to the remark of a professing Christian, who had been saying that it cost him but little to support the gospel—so little, indeed, that he *never felt it.*

We have too many Christians of the latter type, too few of the former. The first speaker had commenced life poor and unaided by wealthy friends. God led him on to the possession of wealth, position and influence, and gave him grace to carry out in his prosperity the engagements which he had made in his youth and poverty. "I want to feel that the gospel costs me something," he added.

Surely this is the true spirit of consecration, and when it shall take possession of the entire Church, prompting the rich man in his wealth and the poor man in his poverty to habitual liberality, we may expect to see speedy success crown the labors of the Lord's people. Because Jesus Christ loved us and gave himself for us, we are bound to give not only ourselves, but our possessions, our time and our influence to his cause. In the consecration of ourselves to Christ, must be included the consecration of all that we have. "Not my own, but the Lord's," is the motto which the believer should write upon his earthly portion as well as on his heart.

LOVE NOT FEAR.

Christianity is not a system of fear and compulsion, but of love and liberty, yet it recognizes the claims of duty in every relation of the individual both to God and to man. It does not leave the regulation of our life to mere impulse, but it commands with authority, saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." Christ implants his love in the heart as the impelling power of the new life, and then gives us the rule of this life, showing us the *manner* and the *measure* of its activities.

Giving is an important part of Christian duty, an essential element in the formation and growth of Christian character, a source of purest joy in the heart and a means of wondrous influence in doing good. Yet upon this point the pulpit is comparatively silent in its instructions. Christian literature affords meagre information upon it. Christian life, as seen in the great body of church members, is so far below the rule of Scripture requirement that the world mocks while the schemes of the Church languish. These things ought not so to be. The voice of Him who gave himself for his body cries, "Awake, thou that sleepest!"

Shall not our ministers and elders, as those who are appointed to watch and warn and guide the flock of God, seek to bring the Bible rule more clearly before the mind, and more closely to the heart of every church member, in order that we may learn and others may see how God honors those who honor him with their substance and with the first-fruits of their increase.

RESPONSIBILITY.

We need to locate responsibility on each individual for the use of every penny of his possessions. We wish to show how each for himself, and all unitedly as a body, may most easy and successfully carry out the Saviour's command, "Freely give."

The words recorded Deut. xvi. 10, "Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God, with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God," bring this subject before our minds with such earnestness and tenderness that we take them as embodying the instructions of a great many passages of the Old and New Testaments on the Christian duty of giving. In these words seven thoughts are presented:

I. *A Christian duty—Giving.*
II. *The agent who is to perform it—Each believer.*
III. *The object—God's cause.*
IV. *The measure—Our ability.*
V. *The method—Systematically.*
VI. *The manner—Gladly.*
VII. *The spirit—Free will.*

A CHRISTIAN DUTY.

I. By this question we are at once brought face to face with God our Creator, Preserver and Lawgiver. When any matter is settled as being a duty, those who claim to be his willing subjects, are called at once to undertake its performance. No difficulty must be allowed to stand in the way. God could convert, sanctify and

fully bless our race by supernatural agencies, without calling on his people for one cent for that purpose, but he does not see fit so to do. The command is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and obedience to this requires perpetual outlay of effort, time and means on the part of Christians.

The will of God in regard to our giving is made clear in his word by numerous commands, by the commendation of liberality and the condemnation of the opposite, by warnings of danger and pleadings for fidelity. In his providence the same is enforced by his care over those who honor him in this way, and his judgment on those who break his law in regard to this. The instincts of the new creature, as they at first prompt to a full, unreserved surrender of all to God, indicate God's will and the believer's duty.

By giving to the Lord we recognize his claims upon us, as we declare to the world that we hold all as a trust from him. Giving, rightly done, is an act of worship before him who has said, "Bring an offering and come into his courts."

God has thus provided for keeping alive in our hearts a sense of our obligations, by calling for the habitual expression of our allegiance. He has enjoined this duty as a means of grace. From the way in which many use this means they surely expect very little grace; "a pennyworth" is as much as they ever seek at one time, and if it be possible to escape, they do not seek to get by giving at any time.

Giving is a duty, not only because it honors God and draws blessings to ourselves, but because it produces a proper love to and care for our fellow-man. Sin has so enwrapped us with selfishness that we care

not for the sorrows and wants of others as we ought Christ attests his own mission and that of his Church by saying, "To the poor the gospel is preached." Every hungry mouth, every unclad body, every ignorant fellow-being, every perishing sinner, calls upon us, by the fact that we know his need, to *give*, not only for his sake, but for God's sake. In this way, by mutual deeds of kindness and love, it is God's purpose that the human brotherhood shall be knit together in Christ. God hath chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith and a future heritage, and he makes us, as his children, almoners of his bounty to them.

How wonderful is the command, "Thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God!" He in whom rests the ownership of the universe waits to accept the trifling token of our love and devotion! Let us, with the fullness of our gifts to God, exclaim with David, "Of thine own have we given thee," and with every call on our liberality remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

THE AGENTS.

II. Upon whom rests the obligation to give? Who shall be the dispenser of God's bounty? May not the father act for his entire family? Cannot a few representatives in a congregation perform this duty in a wholesale way, so as to relieve individual members of the responsibility? Many men and Christians seem to look on it in this way, and in consequence the power of the Church has been crippled, and the Christian life of her members dwarfed.

Throughout this chapter the word *thou* abounds.

The word of God makes it a personal matter. Each man, woman and child must act for himself, as each must answer for himself. No plea of limited income or little means will avail for the neglect of this duty. "She hath done what she could" is the golden commendation which is within the reach of the poorest of the poor, as well as the richest.

"Every man shall give as he is able"—"They shall not appear before the Lord empty"—such are the rules of him into whose presence we all come. Our Lord always confers his choicests gifts with lavish hand. Kings may get diamonds, but those things which are more valuable—sunshine, air and water are the heritage of the beggar and the savage as well as of the king and the sage. So in his spiritual kingdom; every one, old and young, rich and poor, high and low, may freely share the blessings which are secured by giving. None may neglect the duty and despise the privilege without suffering loss and rendering his account.

When thoroughly sifted, the plea of little ability is not the true reason for not performing this duty. The real reason is selfishness, which hides under the garb of assumed humility. After some effort has been made for Christ's cause in a congregation, it is a common thing to hear some person speak with great satisfaction, saying, "We have done well"—"Our church gives liberally," while they as individuals have given absolutely nothing, or such a pittance as would put them to shame if they should happen to see it printed with their name.

We need to adopt some method of collecting our offerings which will make each appear to himself in

his true character. We have assumed too long that every professing Christian, has an enlightened, active, tender conscience, which will keep him up to his duty. We must begin to awaken the conscience of many men, and educate it by the Scripture rule in this matter of giving, until it can be trusted with a collection box as well as a subscription paper.

There is a large element in the membership of the Church which is of no use whatever to the cause of Christianity—which is a drag and a burden rather than a help. Every professor who is not *giving* his proportion for the extension as well as the support of Christ's cause belongs to this class. If faithful preaching and church discipline will not make such persons useful, it should drive them away; the Church would be vastly better without them. If they migrate to other departments of the Church, so much the worse for those to whom they go. One man, who was thus shifted, when asked why he had gone, replied that he "could enjoy religion in the church to which he had gone for fifty cents a year"—less than *one cent* a week for himself and family. How much enjoyment would that be for each? There are multitudes no better. Some are very fond of that preaching which instructs the mind, warms the heart, fires the zeal and nerves the will of the hearer, provided it is not ultimately intended to open the purse. So soon as it is seen looking in that way, the pious hearer says, as the Highland man did of one of Chalmers' charity sermons, which urged self-denial on the audience, "He is a guid preacher, but he's o'er warldly."

"The gold is mine and the silver is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts," and no believer is permitted to disre-

gard the relation which God has established between gold and the Gospel. Pastors must ring out the words "EVERY MAN" in regard to the matter of giving, until sleeping consciences are awakened. Sessions must apply these principles to each applicant for membership, and after admission *keep them applied*. "Thou and thy God" are terms which bring each face to face with duty in this matter of giving.

THE OBJECT.

III. *God's cause.* — Few persons in the Church inquire very closely how much they give truly for God's sake. Many a man is open-handed toward self in his person, in his family or in his church (there is much selfishness often covered up in those two words, "*Our Church*"), and he calls this liberality godly giving, while there is little really religious principle, if any, in all he does. All has been for self in one guise or other. Again, many professing Christians give nothing for foreign missions, nothing for home missions, nothing to educational causes, nothing to publication causes, nothing to the Bible society, nothing to the tract society, nothing to any one of all the schemes of benevolence which the Church has on hand; and next to nothing, a mere pittance, to secure church privileges for themselves year by year, while they freely spend twenty, thirty, fifty, or, as one man confessed to me, more than two hundred dollars, for a single hurtful indulgence, such as tobacco. There are few churches in which such persons may not be found. Is not the cause of God worthy of their thought and support? Is it not worth while, in order to give that cause a reasonable support, to deny them-

selves of some indulgence, especially if it be a hurtful one? Has God anywhere taught us that we are to give to him only of our superfluity, and to serve him with that which costs us nothing?

We generally value anything by what it costs us. We esteem the cause of Christ in proportion to what we do for it. To show the condition of entire churches in this matter let me state a fact. A congregation in Pennsylvania felt themselves unable to support their pastor, and lamented the fact. Being a very practical man, he noted their habits, and offered to stay with them if they would give for his salary the money they (the church members) were spending for tobacco and whisky. Some of them weighed the matter, told him that he would get a large salary on those terms, but, as you have already surmised, they did not try the experiment.

A young girl once said, "Give me a motive and I can do anything." Surely here is a motive set before every Christian in the words "*For God's Cause,*" which will make him liberal according to his ability.

THE MEASURE OF GIVING.

IV. *The measure of our giving should be our ability.* —Shame compels almost every one to give something on Sabbath when the plate or box passes him in the presence of others, but that which is given is always the smallest coin in the purse. Such gifts to the Lord's cause cannot claim much connection with either heart or conscience. This question of the measure of giving has a twofold bearing, viz.: what a man should give in the aggregate as his yearly contribution, and how much on each particular occasion.

No precise sum or portion can be fixed as an absolute rule ror all. Christ leaves a large margin of liberty as to the expression of our love to him by the offerings which we make to his cause. If only we love much, we shall not go far astray. The amount or proportion which we give one year might not be proper for another. There are some general principles by which each Christian may readily discover his duty in particular circumstances. He should realize that all he holds is in trust *from* and *for* God. God intends that his children shall have a comfortable support out of the proceeds of their labor. They may also use a portion of their gains to secure farther income for the future. But whatever they have, be it little or much, a suitable proportion, in keeping with their income and their outlay for themselves, is to be sacredly employed in advancing his cause.

We should realize that in *all* cases a part of our increase is to be faithfully and cheerfully given to the Lord. A man has accomplished a great deal when he deliberately recognizes this duty and resolves to act on it habitually. The light will grow clearer on the path of such a one. He should realize that inasmuch as our privileges are far greater than were those enjoyed under the Jewish dispensation, our gifts should be proportionately greater than were the offerings under that dispensation. NEVER LESS. Not only was one-tenth of all his increase given by the pious Israelite, but some calculate that one-third or one-half of his income was required. He should realize that as his possessions increase, the *proportion* of his income expended for Christianity should increase more rapidly. If a man who gains $1000 in the year,

gives one-tenth or $100, when his income is increased say to $10,000, he should certainly give far more than $1000, or one-tenth of $10,000. He can have a comfortable support and enlarge his business far more effectively in the last case, even if he should give $2000 or $4000 to the Lord's cause, than he could in the first case, where he gave one-tenth.

That was an earnest and resolute Christian who deliberately sat down and wrote, "By the grace of God I will never be worth more than $50,000." As his income increased from year to year, he still gave away a larger proportion of it, until his whole income beyond his support was expended in doing the Lord's work. By a Christian worker in our bounds nearly $100,000 of his income was given to the Lord, and an elder in New York is said to have spent some $600,000 annually of late years in this way. Far more grace is needed to enable a man to increase his proportion of gifts as his riches increase. Almost any poor Christian can be induced willingly to give ten cents of his hard-earned dollar, but if the same man prospers until he earns $100 each day, it will not be as easy to get from him $10, not to say $30 or $50, of what he makes as it was to get the one-tenth of his small earnings.

"AS YOU ARE ABLE." "*As thy God hath blessed thee.*" These are God's rules for one's giving, and it remains with the Church and the individual Christian to apply them honestly. While a man thus uses his income at large, each claim in its order calls for his prayerful consideration, that he may give wisely as well as liberally.

"Blind Hohannes, one of the native pastors in the Eastern Turkey Mission—a poor, half-educated, rough-

looking man—has begun an influence upon the world that promises to be second to that of scarce any other Christian of the age. He is the father of the movement for *tithes* which is becoming so general in Turkey, and has already been introduced with the best results in India, and will no doubt extend to all Christian lands. A very interesting letter to the *Missionary Herald* describes the man, and the effect of a sermon which the writer heard him preach on the subject of tithes. In that sermon he gave an account of the history of his own connection with the movement. After finishing his course of study, he went to settle as pastor in a village where considerable labor and money had been expended by the Board, but with little development of the spirit of liberality on the part of the people; in fact, it had never been called out. The missionaries promised him a salary of 1500 piastres, equal to $60. They told him that the people would pay 600 piastres of this amount. He found that they had with great difficulty subscribed 500 piastres, and could do no more. While considering the matter and praying over it, it seemed as if an intuition from God impressed on his mind the thought, Let them give the tenth. He asked himself if he could spare 150 piastres from his scanty salary. It seemed too much; but, when he thought of distributing the amount through the year, he determined to devote twelve and a half piastres each month to the cause of Christ. He immediately presented the matter to his people. They received it as a word from God. They subscribed their tenths; and, to their surprise, the sum amounted to more than his entire salary. From that time the movement has gathered strength,

and is the most interesting feature of the missionary work."

In order that we may give according to our *ability*, we must,

AS TO METHOD,

V. *Give Systematically.*—The Jewish worshiper was reminded of his duty by the regular return of the feast which God appointed, at which he "was not to appear empty." In 1 Cor. xvi. 2 the Apostle Paul, while he repeats the old law of ability "*as God hath prospered,*" fixes the New Testament directions more definitely: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store." Without system no worldly business can be successfully carried on; and this is equally true in the Lord's service.

It is just at this point that many Christians make a serious mistake. They give when called on, according as they happen to have it, not as they have "laid by in store"—that is, made provision for it. Giving is to be *constant business* with the Christian, and he must make preparations for it beforehand if he would do as he ought. The rapidity with which settled sums accumulate will surprise any one who has not looked into the matter. In this way our fund for Christian causes should be kept supplied. The ease with which we can give small sums frequently, rather than large sums at long intervals, is a strong argument in favor of this method. After a careful experiment and observation I am free to affirm that in most cases, a person can give ten times as much in this way as in any other.

There is not one church member in a hundred

who could not save five cents each day for the cause of Christ, if anxious and determined so to do. So many could do far more than this that this would be a low average: this in a congregation of two hundred members would amount in a year to $3650.

If every congregation in one presbytery or synod would only heartily make the experiment for one year, and secure the systematic effort of each member, how wonderful would be the result! Such increase in contributions to the various benevolent schemes of the Church would make the Church realize more fully her strength, and call out into other fields the benevolent energies now latent. Such systematic collections could easily be made by the organization of a board of collectors, each of whom might have a card with the names and daily subscriptions of some ten members. These collectors could report monthly to the general treasurer, and then the congregation by direct vote, or through a committee appointed by the session, could apportion the funds to such objects as are brought to their notice.

THE MANNER OF GIVING.

VI. *Gladly.*—"Love lightens labor." The successful execution of any work requires that the heart be in it. Whenever it can be said that "the people have a mind to the work," great results may be expected. The offerings spoken of in the passage before us were festive offerings. In like manner all the contributions of Christians should be given gladly. It is a reproach to religion and a sad evidence of a wrong state of mind and heart when a Christian gives reluctantly to the Lord's cause, or murmurs at the frequency of the

calls made upon him. "Not by constraint, but willingly," should be the inscription placed by each giver on every gift: "God loves a cheerful giver." It is thus that God bestows his blessings on us, and he calls us to give in like manner as we have received.

A service reluctantly rendered by our fellow-men is never acceptable to ourselves; how much less must such service be approved by Him who is the Searcher of hearts! Men should thank God for the opportunity of giving and for the smallest ability to give. Let the one who loves to give to the Lord thank him most for the disposition to give.

Everything in our method of supporting the gospel which tends to impress men with the idea that they are *paying a tax* which is compulsory, or that they pay a certain amount as a business arrangement, and by doing this are exempt from all other obligations to the Lord for the way in which they use his money—everything which fosters such ideas is wrong.

Every Christian gift should be a *free will* offering, and every expression connected with it should be of joy and gladness.

As men gladly receive, so they should as gladly or more gladly give. The head of every family should so arrange matters that each member of the family may have some means of giving that which is his own. Let the little child feel that by some special service he can obtain that which he may give as his own offering to the Lord.

GIVING AS TO ITS SPIRIT.

VII. *Should be willingly.*—If anything be done gladly, it must be done with a willing spirit; yet the

very name of these offerings, "*free will*," is so expressive of heartiness and consecration that it is worthy of notice. While this consecration is made under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the whole heart of the giver goes with it, and the gift becomes the emblem and the expression of his own personal devotion to God. When the world shall see the Church in all her service and gifts manifesting this willingness, such an impression will be made of the power of religion in the heart, and of the beauty of religion in the life, as never has been made heretofore, and the Head of the Church will endow his faithful Church with new power for her great work. The enterprises of the Church at home and abroad would not languish one day if each Christian would do what he can.

We still lack such thorough organization in the Church as will give proper expression to the idea of individual obligation in giving, and secure the development of liberality in every heart according to the Scripture rule.

Many persons would be truly thankful for such arrangement as would enable them effectively to do what they can. Some no doubt would be aggrieved at any help which would enable them to give more than they do, for their study is not how much they can give, but how little they can give and retain a respectable position in the eyes of others.

Under the influence of a wise system, which would keep every man's responsibility before him, those who have the love of God in their hearts will grow out of their selfish views and feelings and come to the freedom and joy of Christian love and liberty. Those who only have a name to live, while they love money more than

God, by the example of others may have their eyes opened to their true condition before it is too late for repentance.

Undoubtedly the Church is as yet very far from a proper sense of her DUTY and her ABILITY in the matter of giving. She should not only confess her sin, but bring forth fruit meet for repentance.

It will be a glorious day in the history of the Church when every member shall understand his obligation to give to the Lord's cause systematically, according to his ability, rejoicing as he presents his free will offerings.

CHRIST WILL GIVE YOU REST

More precious than water to a man dying of thirst; better than certain cure to one nigh unto death; more welcome than pardon to a rebel in his cell, is the voice of mercy, saying to the sinner—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

These are words that can never lose their sweetness or power. They are as true and as full of comfort now as when first spoken, and are as free to those who hear the gospel in the present day, as they were to those who first heard them in the land of Galilee.

* Matthew xi. 28.

Who is he that speaks? It is the voice of God. What man or angel could invite a guilty world to come to *him?* Neither Moses, nor Elijah, nor Paul, nor John ever called on men to look to them for rest. Only He in whom dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," could take upon himself to give rest to every troubled soul.

It is the voice of a loving Saviour—the Good Shepherd of the sheep—the Redeemer of men—whose love led him to take the form of a servant, and to humble himself to the death of the cross.

To whom does he speak these words? To all who hear the sound of the gospel. They are spoken to the man of pleasure or of sorrow—the man of wealth or the poor man—the wise man and the weak man—to "every creature under heaven." And yet they seem well suited to those

who are cast down with a sense of their guilt. To those who feel they have a dark mind, a hard heart, and a load of sin that presses them to the ground, these words come as words of peace and hope.

How must you come? Not by a bodily approach; this now we cannot do. Such a coming might be useless. Many came thus to Christ when he was on earth; they heard his words and saw his works of mercy, and yet were not blessed, for they had not faith. Coming to Christ is the act of the soul; it is called trusting, receiving, believing on him. It is the sinner giving full credit to the truth of gospel promises. It is the hearty belief that Jesus is able and willing to save from the guilt and power of sin, and from hell.

Will YOU *come to Christ?* Then come

just as you are, helpless, full of guilt and misery. You can come in no other way, for a sense of sin and ruin lies at the root of the religion of the gospel. Do not, for a moment, suppose that you must make yourself better, or prepare your heart before you come to Christ; but come at once—come as you are. He saves none because their sins are few: he rejects none because their sins are many and great.

Christ knew the worst of all those who would come to him. He knew the depths of sin to which men would go. He knew that they would need just such a promise to be given to them; and because he knew that he could save the worst of the human race, he said, "Come unto me,—I will not cast you out."

If he made such a promise, what can prevent his making it good? Sooner

shall heaven and earth pass away than any sinner who seeks him shall be shut out from his mercy. He will not cast you out because of the number of your sins, nor because of their greatness, nor because you have lived in them from early youth to hoary age. You may be an outcast, lost to yourself and your friends; yet say not that you may not come. He speaks to you as though he called you by name. He says, "If *any* man come;" that takes you in. He declares, "I will *in no wise*"—not by any means, or on any account—"cast him out." Surely you may trust his word.

No man, then, who hears the gospel can say that he is not invited. Stand where we may on this wide earth—to those of every clime, and every age, and every condition of life—to the lovers of pleasure, or wealth, or any of the things

of this world, and to the most guilty of the human race, with joy these words may be spoken, "Come unto Christ."

The promise is, that he will give you REST. And this includes pardon and peace with God. It is to be free from fear and remorse, and from all false hopes. It is comfort for the worst; it is peace for the troubled spirit; it is a balm for every evil that can come upon you in life; and it is the pledge of the pure, eternal rest of heaven.

What is the warrant of all this? Think of Him who spoke these words. Christ is Divine Love in human nature. The great end for which he came into the world was to seek and to save sinners. He came to honor and obey the law which man had broken. He came to die "the just for the unjust"*—to offer him-

* 1 Peter, iii. 18.

self on the cross for your guilt. The promise, then, that he makes rests on the value of the price he paid for your salvation. He does not offer a gift that cost him nothing; and yet it may be had "without money and without price."

Consider, too, that he is "meek and lowly in heart," and will not scorn you. When did he ever turn away from the cry of distress, or from the prayer of the most vile? When did he ever reject those who sought his aid, however lowly their state or great their sorrow? All who have come to him have been welcomed; and if you draw nigh with faith, he will not cast you out. And that you may come aright, he will give, if you ask, the aid of his Holy Spirit, to lead you to feel your sins and to rely on his grace to save you.

What will you say to this "golden

saying"—these loving words? Will you not come at once? There is danger if you delay. Do not make excuse, nor stand looking at a distance; but come, and with faith cast yourself at the feet of Christ with the earnest cry, "Lord, save, or I perish.—Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," Luke xix. 10.

"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29.

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DO YOU BELIEVE ON CHRIST?

THERE are many promises of salvation in the Holy Scriptures, and they are sure promises, because they are God's promises. Hear what God says:—(John iii. 36). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." What a difference between the first and last parts of this verse! And the last part is as true as the first.

So it is said in Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is the eternal God that in each declaration says "SHALL."

So also, in Acts xvi. 31, it is said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" and in a multitude of other texts of God's word, the same great truth is uttered, that to believe on Christ is salvation, to refuse to believe is eternal ruin.

If then we can understand just what it is to believe on Christ, we shall be able to tell whether we are in saving relations to Him. If we find that we are not, we shall also know what we must do to be saved.

The word which in the New Testament is rendered "believe," does not mean a mere mental assent to truth. If we should receive as true all the truth in the Bible, and have no error mixed with it, this would not be believing on Christ. With the most correct creed we may be lost.

The same word that is used in these promises of salvation, and translated believe, is also rendered "faith," "trust," 'commit," &c., and means, most literally, to commit something to the trust of another.

Thus in John ii. 24, Jesus "did not commit himself" to the people; that is, He did not submit or trust himself to their control. "Commit" is here translated from the word that is elsewhere rendered believe.

So, in Luke xvi. 11, it is rendered commit to your trust. ("Who will commit to your trust the true riches?") In Romans iii. 2, and in 1 Cor. ix. 17, it is similarly rendered. Thus it appears that to believe on Christ, is to commit, or trust, or submit ourselves to Him.

The same truth appears also from other passages in both the Old and New Testa-

ments in which the same exercise is described by other words, and the same promise given. Thus, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls," that is, submit to me and trust me. Thus did the returning prodigal crying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

But, to avoid any mistake, let me illustrate this act that is called believing.

If you have money to send to some distant place, or that you wish to have expended in the wisest way, and you have a friend of whose honesty and wisdom you have not a doubt, you may keep your money and your good opinion of your friend unabated, but you do not trust him until you commit the treasure

to his hand. So you may cherish the opinion that Jesus is just such a Saviour as you need, but you do not trust him, that is believe on him, until you commit yourself to him, trusting his wisdom to guide you, and depending upon his merit as the ground of your acceptance with God.

I have a friend who is almost blind. He cannot walk a strange path safely without a guide, for what seems to his imperfect vision the smoothest ground may be but the open mouth of a pit. He has many friends who lead him to such places as he wishes to visit. He has confidence in each of them or he would not dare to go where they might lead. But he does not actually trust or commit himself to them until he begins to walk by their leading. His confidence in them is shown in his walking by

their leading; his faith is seen by his works. So we who are blind in spiritual things, believe on Christ or trust him, when we commit ourselves to him, to take care of our souls, to save us by his merit and in his own way; when we begin to live according to his will and word, trusting him to lead, and guide, and protect us through this dangerous world; when we take his yoke upon us and learn of him; when we cast ourselves as returning prodigals upon his mercy.

A sick man knows he has a fatal disease, and knows just one doctor that can cure him. He has no doubt of it. He knows of no other that can relieve him. But he does not like his remedies, and so delays, and wishes to choose his own remedies, taking what his taste and judgment may indicate, and rejecting what he dislikes. Now, he is not trusting his

physician until he submits entirely to him and uses such remedies as he shall prescribe. But, if he is a reasonable man, he will be very anxious to be under that very physician's care; he will anxiously and zealously try to follow his directions; often will he tell his symptoms and plead with this wise physician to save him, if possible, from death. CHRIST is our only physician. Do you seek to have your leprosy of sin healed? Then are you earnestly committing yourself to him? Do you believe with the heart upon him?

The seaman is nearing a dangerous shore, the storm rages and darkness is closing upon his frail bark. The coast is a strange one, and he knows not what to do or how to steer. He thinks of his treasure, of his wife and children, all on that frail ship. But now

he hears through the gloom and storm, a pilot's voice; it is a skillful and faithful pilot. He has the highest confidence in him, and sees that in committing his ship to his management and control is his only hope. The rocks are near, just visible by the white foaming breakers that dash upon their stern granite ridges. He does not wait for terms from the good pilot; he beseeches him to get on board his ship, he resigns the whole management to the pilot's hand. When he thus does and begins to obey, he believes on him, he trusts him; not coldly and indifferently, but earnestly, he believes with the heart, putting himself, his all, into his hands. Nor is he merely willing but very earnest that the pilot should control and direct in everything. So the Christian should believe with the heart, cling to Jesus, and put his all into his hands, for the

storm and night of death will soon be on him.

Now, reader, do you understand just what it is to believe on Christ? Do you believe on Christ? Do you thus commit yourself to him? Do you now desire that Jesus should take care of your soul? Do you see that you are in danger of being ruined by sin? Have you committed yourself to Christ?

Do you feel that the disease of sin is upon you? That it gains power over you day by day, and will destroy your soul and body? Knowing this, do you cry earnestly to the great physician? Conscious that you are nearing the end of life's voyage, do you commit yourself to the good pilot? You have the witness in yourself, your own consciousness; how does it testify?

If you have not believed on him, be-

lieve on him now, I beseech you. Are not his terms of surrender reasonable? Free forgiveness and a crown! Christ is knocking at your door. Not to admit is to reject him. Then reject him not. Believe on him. Trust him. Obey him—NOW.

"FOLLOW ME."

THIS is one of Christ's favorite modes of inviting men to become his disciples. Thus he concluded his answer to that young ruler who came asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. To Simon and Andrew casting their nets, he said "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." To Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, he said, "Follow me." And thus, too, he often describes the condition of Christian discipleship. "He that taketh not his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

"If any man serve me, let him follow me."

In these words, therefore, we have the Saviour's own direction how to become his disciples.

Perhaps, reader, you are anxiously asking this question, "*How shall I become a Christian? What shall I do?*" This is what I shall try to tell you in these pages: and I say to you, generally, the whole matter is summed up in these two words of Jesus, "*Follow me.*"

Suppose Jesus were here to-day, and you could go to him for counsel, just as you go to your pastor or your friend. Suppose, going thus, you should say to him, "I want to know how to be freed from sin, and how to reach heaven. What must I do?" Probably he would answer you in these very words, "*Follow me.*" And if you were really in earnest,

more so than that young ruler; if you were resolved to win heaven at any cost; to be Christ's disciple at any sacrifice; to escape from the power of sin by any means, you would go straight after him, whithersoever he might lead. You would do just what he might tell you to do, every hour and day; you would lift, or try to lift every burden he might point out; you would follow him over rough as well as smooth places; you would toil as long as he might direct, and rest only when and where he might bid you.

Perhaps you have sometimes thought what a pleasant and comforting thing it would be to have Jesus thus always with, or before you. You think you would only have to ask him what to do, and do it, knowing that this course, steadfastly pursued, would lead you to heaven.

My dear inquirer, this is just what you

may do; the only thing you ought to do. Christ is no less a living, loving presence because he is unseen. Cannot you believe in and consult him without putting your fingers into the prints of the nails, and thrusting your hand into his side? Christ is as really your present, living guide, example, teacher, counsellor, as he was such to the first disciples. That you do not see him makes no difference. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

I assume therefore, that you come to a *living* Christ; no mere abstraction, but a *divine person;* and ask "what shall I do?" That you come, understand me, not asking merely to satisfy your curiosity as to what this Divine teacher will say, but feeling a deep need which you are convinced he only can relieve. Fully convinced that he alone has the words of

eternal life, and fully resolved to obey those words, when you shall have known them, at any cost.

What says Jesus to you?

"FOLLOW ME." Begin at once to discharge Christian duties. There is my example in the gospels. There are my precepts. Take those down into your life, and begin at once to live by them. If you are the head of a family, as you begin your duties to-morrow with your eye on Christ, you will see his steps turned toward the family altar. Perhaps you never offered an audible prayer in your life. Perhaps there is a large circle of relatives and friends of whose remarks and criticisms you are afraid. Nevertheless, Christ will move straight towards that altar, saying "*Follow me.*" Or perhaps he will go before you to the house or store of some man you wronged years

ago, and will say "Follow me, and make restitution." Perhaps he will lead you to one of your own house; of your own blood, whom you have injured, saying, "Follow me. Heal this breach. Make confession." No matter whither he leads you, follow him.

But you will say, "Hold. You are altogether too fast. You are bidding me perform Christian duties before I am a Christian. I am not yet converted. I cannot begin to follow Jesus until then. A change must come over me. My whole life and character must receive a violent wrench. I must pass through a period of sighing, and tears, and anguish, and then emerge into a state of joy. After this I will begin to follow Jesus."

But we are supposing, remember, that Jesus is *personally* directing you. There is absolutely no difference between his

saying to you, "follow me," and his saying the same thing to Matthew or Peter at their employments. And how did they become Jesus' disciples? Did they say, "we must go home and lament over our sins; we must spend a week or so in fasting and tears; we must have a sudden illumination of heart, and then we will follow thee?" No. They simply obeyed Jesus. They left everything and went after him *at once*. Remember this, because I shall refer to it again. They left *everything*, and went *at once* after Jesus.

"But surely I must be convicted of sin. Surely I must repent. Surely I must feel very badly." Certainly you must be convicted and repent. I never heard of any one being saved without this. As to your feelings, leave that question for the present, and hold to our

simple thought. You are here saying to Jesus, "Lord, I have a heavy burden that I want to get rid of. I have a nature which leads me to displease and hate thee, when I know I ought to love and serve thee. My past offences trouble me. I am afraid of their consequences. The world gives me no peace. What shall I do?"

But why did you come to Jesus? Was it because you loved sin? Was it because you wanted to continue in sin? Was it because you did not care whether you served Christ or not? Does a man go to a doctor when he feels well? Does he study the guide books and seek transportation from a city when he wants to stay there? Why, I ask again, have you come to Jesus? Something must have brought you here. It is not mere curiosity, for you say you have come to have

a burden removed: a stain wiped out; to win a power which you have not now. It is not a mere spirit of intellectual inquiry like that of Nicodemus asking, "how can these things be?" It is not self-righteousness. It is the consciousness that you have broken the law and want pardon; that you have grieved the loving lawgiver, and want reassurance; that you cannot keep the law, and want strength; that you are distressed by all this, and want comfort. And now, if Christ should say to you, "Follow me," you would say, "Lord, I am willing to do anything, relinquish anything, go whither thou leadest me, even straight away from the sin I have loved best, if I can only find the pardon, and peace, and strength I desire."

"Well," says Jesus, "follow me." And you reply, "Oh how I wish I could! I

will, just as soon as I shall have been convicted, and have repented, and have been converted."

My friend, you are playing with edged-tools, and they are cutting you cruelly. You are using words with only the vaguest sense of their meaning. Conviction and repentance signify to you, if they signify anything, some fearful state of excitement, and despair, and terror. You don't know what it is, but you suppose you will know when you reach that point. You think you are going to be whirled along by new and strange forces, over the track of a perfectly new experience, just as one is borne in a balloon, having nothing to do but sit still and be carried, now into the clouds, now into the sunshine. It does not seem to occur to you that God's Spirit may work upon you through familiar channels, your judg-

ment, your will, your common sense, your temperament.

And now I go back to my question, What makes you come to Jesus? "Because sin oppresses me. Because my ingratitude to a loving God torments me. Because I want to escape from sin and its consequences at any cost to myself." And so here you are, after all, the subject of a genuine repentance, yet mourning because you have not repented. You are like a man who goes fidgeting about for his pen, and all the while it is safely behind his ear. You have given the best possible evidence of repentance by coming to Jesus in this spirit, and for these purposes.

For repentance is not simply feeling sorry. It is a change of mind, following a sense of sin, which translates itself into action, and sends a man to Jesus

for pardon and hope. Repentance, to be worth anything at all, must involve doing as well as feeling. Hence Scripture speaks of it as growing out of sorrow rather than as consisting in sorrow. It tells us of a godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation. The prodigal, sitting mournfully among the swine and feeding on husks, felt very sorry as he thought of his father's goodness and his own folly, but that was not repentance. He said, "I will go to my Father and confess my sins;" but his repentance was not complete yet. If he had merely sat there resolving, it would have contributed nothing toward his restoration. But when he arose and came to his father, and said, "I have sinned," he furnished a perfect example of a godly sorrow working repentance.

So then I say to you who have come

to Jesus, tired of sin, confessing your sin, asking release from your sin;—the work of repentance is done; you give the great practical test of it, by coming to Jesus and saying in sincerity, "I am willing to take up the cross and follow thee."

"But my feelings are not what they should be. I have not yet reached the point of intense agony. I have not been so overwhelmed as to be obliged to abandon my business and to 'forget to eat my bread.' In fact it troubles me that I take this matter so quietly; that I do not feel more deeply."

And who told you you must feel so much agony before you could be saved? I know Jesus never did. Indeed he says very little about feeling anywhere. He says a great deal more about doing. And now let me say to you that if you

have prescribed for yourself any particular state or degree of feeling as necessary to your salvation, you had better dismiss that thought at once; for you will be pretty sure to be disappointed. You may have some such feelings as you expect. You probably will not. And let me ask you, Supposing you should have them, how would you know when they had reached the right degree of intensity? How would you know exactly when you were sorry enough? What thermometer have you to indicate the proper height of spiritual desire? What plumb line to gauge the proper depth of misery?

The fact is, no general law can be laid down for the operation of God's Spirit upon the feelings. It is, to carry out the Saviour's own figure, like the action of the wind upon different trees and shrubs.

The same breeze blows upon the poplar, and it shivers, and trembles, and turns its silvery leaves to the light, looking as if some magic had blanched its verdure. It blows upon the elm, and it slowly and gracefully swings its heavy tassels. Upon the pine, and it sways majestically and sings mournfully. Upon the rose, and it shakes and showers its tinted leaves upon the ground. The action of the same wind is modified by the structure of each different tree or plant. So conviction of sin will affect differently each one of a dozen men. You saw A or B, when he was seeking Jesus, and his distress was harrowing; and so you conclude that, because you do not feel as he did, you are no fit subject for salvation.

And here you are sadly mistaken. Two men lose each a child. The funer-

als are on the same day. You go into the house of one, and find him standing over the little coffin, trembling in every limb, his sobs coming thick and fast, and calling his child's name in tones of the bitterest anguish. You repair to the other's house. He sits calmly by his dead; not a tear in his eye. He speaks to you in his accustomed tone about his child. He asks if your own little ones are well. Now, will you go and tell your friends that the latter is a man of no feeling, and that he does not seem at all affected by his loss? Do you not, on the contrary, ascribe to him a grief as deep and as sincere as his neighbor's? Do you not know that the quiet, self-contained man is often the keener sufferer of the two?

So your friend may have been harassed, horrified, overwhelmed by the view of

his sinful state. He may fill the nights with weeping and forget to eat his bread. You, on the contrary, may just as clearly discern your relations to God, hate sin as intensely, long as earnestly to escape from it: yet with you, it may be rather a matter of judgment than of feeling. You have looked your condition fairly in the face. You have thrown your eye unflinchingly down the abyss of ruin on the brink of which you find yourself. You have deliberately pronounced sentence against yourself as a sinner, and all the energies of your will have concentrated themselves in the iron resolve to forsake sin, to go to Jesus and seek pardon. And, to repeat what I have already said, this is the practical test after all; this coming to Jesus in such a spirit. You and your friend reach the same point by different roads. The same con-

viction manifests itself in both through your natural differences of temperament and character, as the same light shines through different colored panes. What I want to know of you is, not how you feel, but if you have arisen and gone to Jesus. If your sense of sinfulness begets in you a degree of emotion bordering on frenzy, and does not bring you to that point, I brand your so called repentance as spurious. If your feelings are calm as a summer sea, and yet bring you to the cross with confession and submission, I ask nothing more. Jesus asks nothing more.

"All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him."

And now comes the worst difficulty of all. "I cannot follow Jesus until I have been converted. Oh, I would do anything for that. How joyfully would I

follow him if I could only feel myself converted. How can I attain this blessing?" You turn inquiringly to the Saviour, and the old answer comes back, "Follow me." And this is what puzzles you; for you are thinking all the time that you cannot follow Jesus until something has taken place in you; you do not exactly know what; which you call conversion. Conversion is to you a kind of high fence which separates you from the way of life, and over which, or through which you must get before you find Jesus standing ready to guide you.

But is this what the Gospel teaches? Does not your heart say, "Oh, if the Saviour would only take me by the hand and lead me to pardon and peace, as well as lead me afterwards, how sweet and comforting that would be." And straightway Jesus answers, "I am the

way and the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Does Christ come to you only *after* you are converted, and say, "Follow me," or does he come to you in your sins, and call you away from them, and say "Follow me?" Dear friend, you want Jesus to lead you to conversion as well as after conversion; and be assured you never will be converted, (whatever that may mean) until you begin to follow Jesus.

"But must I not experience a change of heart, be regenerated, justified?"

What do these words signify to you? "Nothing." Then lay them aside for the present. You will understand their application by and by. When you go to the Saviour praying to be regenerated or justified, many of you have as little conception of what you want as a child who presents at a druggist's counter a

long, cabalistic prescription. There is one thing you want, and you fully understand it. That is, *pardon*. "Lord, what shall I do to find it?" "Follow me." But what shall I do with this burden of my sins? I cannot follow thee under this weight." "THEN LAY IT DOWN HERE AT MY FEET, AND LEAVE IT, AND FOLLOW ME." This is the great, the vital point to which you have now come. Remember, the disciples left everything and went after Jesus. Are you willing to do as much? Have you faith to lay down your burden at Jesus' feet, and leave it, and follow Christ?

And here, I know, some of you will hesitate a great while. And one reason will be because what I here tell you seems so simple. Your mind has been strained to its utmost tension in anticipation of some terrible struggle, some

tremendous revulsion; and when you are simply told to lay down your load and leave it, you will look at me in amazement and say, "is that all?" Yes, that is all. Oh, how I wish you would believe it at once, and save yourselves hours of anguish and doubt. But I fear that your minds are so strongly bent upon some great effort, that you cannot be satisfied with merely laying down your burden at the feet of Jesus.

"If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?" And therefore, instead of throwing off the load gladly, you act just as if Christ did not know what is in that heavy bundle of sins, and you as much as say to him, "Surely you cannot know what you are telling me to do. Why, there are some awful things in that package. I have been frightfully wicked.

Do you know what you are saying when you tell me to leave it here and follow you?" And so you sit down by the wayside, and you take out this miserable sin, and that bad habit, this unholy desire, that ungoverned temper, and try to dress them up, and smooth them into shape, and make them a little more presentable before you leave them with Jesus. You try to thrust that old habit into the bushes, to polish up that tarnished talent; and all the while the burden is no whit lighter, the bundle no whit less hideous. And still you work, polishing, dressing, concealing, painting, and crying out all the while, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Oh how sadly Jesus looks upon you because you will not take him at his word. Be assured he knows a great deal more about that fearful burden than

even you yourself. If you could, but for one instant, see your sin as he sees it, you would lose all hope. It is a question if your reason would sustain it. Not only does his omniscient gaze behold the sins of which you are conscious, but ten thousand secret faults of whose existence you have no suspicion. Polish and paint it! After you have tricked out the vile thing with all the gilding and drapery which your self-righteousness can devise, he looks through it all, and sees it as it is, full of corruption. You had better abandon the attempt. If I were you, I would not try any longer to make myself better. I would not spend any more time overhauling that old bundle of sins. I would just gather them all up, and lay the miserable, foul load at Jesus' feet, and let him dispose of it as he will.

"Well, but I must exercise faith, must I not?" Certainly you must. But I want to know what you call this acceptance of Jesus; this leaving your burden with him, but faith. Suppose you were a porter, and had to carry a heavy box to a certain place at a given hour. And as you were carrying it, suddenly your strength should fail, and you could go no farther. If some strong friend, one whom you knew well, should come by at the moment and say, "Here, give me the trunk. Go you home and rest. I will see that it is delivered in time;" do you not think you would leave it with him without any farther care? Would you trouble yourself farther about it? Would you not go home and rest?

Now, faith is only believing Jesus. He says, "Leave your burden of sin with me. I am strong, and wise, and

holy. I will take care of it." Do you believe him? He says, "You may do this *now*. You need not carry it any farther." Do you believe him? He says, "Follow me, and I will teach you, guide you, comfort you, supply all your needs." Do you believe that he is able to do this, willing to do this, anxious to do this, and to do it now, this moment? If you do, then take him at his word. Lay down your burden this moment. Why need you be sad a moment longer, when the promise of the Eternal God, who cannot lie, covers both your past and your future; when he agrees to take your load of sin, to put a new heart within you, and be your friend and guide forever?

This is what is meant by saving faith; that which you have thought so hard a matter; believing Jesus' word so implicitly as to do just what he tells

you; that is, lay your burden on him and trust him to take care of it and you.

But now, if you can do this, if you have done this, go on from this point and follow Jesus. Mind that you keep following him. I do not know by just what path he will lead you, but I know that the path will lead straight away from those old sins; and you must not, after you have well advanced on your journey, begin to feel anxious about that vile old bundle, and turn back to see what has become of it, or to satisfy yourself that you put it down in the right place. You have left your sin at the foot of the cross. When Jesus told you to leave it there, he meant that that should be the end of it as far as you were concerned. He meant that you should not thereafter give yourself one moment's uneasiness about it. Even if,

after having commenced to follow Jesus, you should sin again many times, that will not bring the old load upon you again. You profess to have left your past sins with Jesus. Now leave them there in good faith; and if you think of them, let it be to encourage your gratitude for your deliverance from them, and to stimulate you to keep close to your Saviour in future.

Keep these two words, "follow me," every moment before your mind. Leave the old bundle of sins to roll, like Christian's burden in the allegory, into the empty tomb at the foot of the cross, and have done with it forever; for if you go back, and pull it out, and turn it over again, its corruption will sicken you as of old, and much precious time be lost in finding your way back to Jesus. Remember the word of inspiration. "Therefore,

leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." "This one thing I do," says Paul, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Yes, your high calling, seeker of Jesus. Jesus is calling you, not down to the sepulchre from which he has risen, not down to sins abandoned, to tormenting doubt and the pangs of conviction, but up, into ever clearer light, to follow him to higher planes of thought, to higher mountains of vision, to higher attainments of purity and power, and finally to that high and holy place where the King shall be seen in his beauty. Your

high calling. "For our citizenship is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

I say to you then, if you would be a child of God, "follow Jesus." You may fear that you will follow him with halting steps. I have heard men, ere now, assign that as a reason why they did not begin a Christian life. They were afraid they should not hold out; that they should bring reproach upon Christ and his cause. But what a wretched excuse! you certainly cannot be saved if you stay away from Christ.

Admitting the possibility of his promise failing; granting that he refuses to

strengthen you for his service, and to aid you in honoring your profession, your case is no worse than if you stay away from him. But when he bids you leave all that matter to him; when he tells you he knows your weakness and sympathizes with it; knows your liability to temptation, and will, with every temptation, make a way for your escape; will bear tenderly with your frailty, will love you though you err, will be with you alway; what excuse can you have for not beginning to follow Jesus? Shelter yourself no longer behind this miserable evasion. Accept Jesus now on his own terms, and trust in him for future emergencies. Christ told that man with the withered hand to stretch out his hand; not the sound one, but the withered one. It seemed absurd. He had not moved the hand for years. But in faith on the

Saviour's word, he made the effort, and strength and healing came with the attempt. So you may say, "my moral nature is enervated and paralyzed. I cannot follow Jesus consistently if I would." And yet he, knowing this, bates not one jot from the command "follow me." In making the effort. In trying to lead a Christian life. In beginning to drag yourself after Christ if you can do no better, you will find your moral sinews strong again. It is poor policy to stay away from the only one who can give you strength, on the ground that you have not strength to do his will.

I say therefore to you, anxious, doubting inquirer, there is but one thing you ought to do, but one thing you can do, Follow Jesus.

Oh, weary heart, come this hour and sit down in this blessed resting place.

You need not be in heaviness a moment longer, if you will only so far trust Jesus as to leave your load of sin with him. No matter what your feelings may be No matter whether you merely experience a quiet sense of relief, or an ecstatic joy, or a full inflowing of peace. No matter if you have no special feeling at all. Leave all that with Christ. Simply leave yourself and your burden with him, and begin at once to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Lay down the sin that torments you, the grief that harasses you, the burden that galls you, lay it all upon Jesus.

"Do thou full justice to his tenderness,
His mercy prove.
Take him for what he is, oh take him all,
And look above."

Follow Jesus. And he will lead you into the wilderness, perhaps, but angels

will come and minister to you. He may lead you over rough paths, but strength will come as you climb, and the bitter herbs and hard bread of discipline shall be made sweet by lessons such as never man spake. He shall lead you over barren sands, but also, now and then, to some sweet Elim, with palm trees and wells of water. Through the valley of the shadow, but also into green pastures, and beside still waters. Through the cold stream of death, but only that you may stem its waters by the aid of his strong arm, and come up on the other side, to walk forever with Jesus by the river of life. Then, FOLLOW HIM.

INTEMPERANCE.

BEING THE TESTIMONY OF THE

Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

ON

THE SIN, THE EVILS AND THE REMEDY

OF

INTEMPERANCE.

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INTEMPERANCE.

THE Assembly of 1812[1] urged upon "all the ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to deliver public discourses" "on the sin and mischiefs of intemperate drinking;" "pointedly and solemnly to warn their hearers, and especially members of the church, not only against actual intemperance, but against all those habits and indulgences which may have a tendency to produce it;" at the same time enjoining on church sessions to purge the church of a sin so enormous in its mischiefs and so disgraceful to the Christian name.

The Assembly of 1818[2] took the position that "the crime of drunkenness" "may be opposed more successfully by prevention than in any other way." They earnestly recommended, therefore, "the officers and members of our Church to abstain even from the common use of ardent spirits."

The Assembly of 1827[3] pledged "the Presbyterian Church in the United States" to the work of co-operating "with their Christian brethren of every denomination, together with every other friend of our country and of humanity, in one great national effort to accomplish a universal change in the habits and customs of our country relative to the intemperate use of intoxicating liquors;" and they "recommended the presbyteries and congregations under" their "care to co-operate with the friends of the American So-

[1] P. 511. [2] P. 689. [3] P. 214.

ciety for the Promotion of Temperance," then recently formed, "in extending its principles throughout our country."

The Assembly of 1828[4] were so deeply impressed with a sense "of the exceedingly heinous nature of the sin of intemperance in the use of ardent spirits, as in direct opposition to the authority and moral government of God," and "of the great guilt that rests on the Church in this matter, not merely from so many of her members participating in it, while others, with thoughtless insensibility, minister the means of its indulgence to its deluded victims, but especially in having greatly failed, as the light of the world and the salt of the earth, by her instructions, her example, her prayers and her vigorous efforts every way to stay the plague," that they appointed "a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, with special reference to this sin." They commended the Presbyteries for "resolving," most of them, "not only to discontinue and discountenance the use of all kinds of spirituous liquors, but to form associations" for the purpose; and they did "earnestly entreat all the members of our Church, by every humane, patriotic and Christian feeling, to unite in these or similar measures."

The Assembly of 1829[5] unanimously resolved,

1. That this Assembly regard with devout gratitude and praise the great success which has attended the efforts of the friends of the cause of temperance during the past year, as evinced in the increase of the number and zeal of temperance societies, in the diminution of the sale of ardent spirits, and in the exist-

[4] P. 244. [5] P. 262.

ence of a strong and increasing public sentiment against the use of it.

2. That they cordially approve and rejoice in the formation of temperance societies on the principle of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirits, as expressing disapprobation of intemperance in the strongest and most efficient manner, and making the most available resistance to this destructive and wide-spreading evil.

3. That they deeply deplore the apathy manifested by many professing Christians toward the cause of temperance, while many distinguished persons who make no religious profession are prompt and powerful fellow-laborers with Christians in this worthy and divinely-sanctioned cause. And especially do they grieve and wonder that members of our churches, in view of an evil so desolating and so awful in its prospective bearings on all the interests of our country, should not only take no part in the exertions of their brethren and fellow-citizens against intemperance, but by using and trafficking in ardent spirits, be actively engaged in promoting it.

4. That they earnestly recommend, as far as is practicable, the forming of temperance societies in the congregations under their care, and that all members of the churches adopt the principle of entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirits.

5. That as friends of the cause of temperance this Assembly rejoice to lend the force of their example to that cause as an ecclesiastical body by an entire abstinence themselves from the use of ardent spirits.

The Assembly of 1830[6] resolved,

[6] P. 298.

That this Assembly feels bound to repeat a former recommendation to the ministers, elders and members of the churches under its care to discountenance the use of distilled liquors not only by abstaining themselves from the use of such liquors, but by actively promoting every prudent measure devised for the purpose of furthering the cause of temperance.

That while this Assembly would by no means encroach upon the rights of private judgment, it cannot but express its very deep regret that any members of the Church of Christ should at the present day and under existing circumstances feel themselves at liberty to manufacture, vend or use ardent spirits, and thus, as far as their influence extends, counteract the efforts now making for the promotion of temperance.

The Assembly of 1832[7] declare that "it is now a well-established fact that the common use of strong drink, however moderate, has been a fatal, soul-destroying barrier against the influence of the gospel. Consequently, wherever total abstinence is practiced, a powerful instrument of resisting the Holy Spirit is removed."

The Assembly of 1833[8] speak of it as "cause for the bitterest lamentation" "that some of the members of our churches, instead of aiding those who have bound themselves by a solemn pledge to abstain for ever from this poison of body and soul, continue its use, its sale and its manufacture."

The Assembly of 1834[9] "resolved that the traffic in ardent spirits, to be used as a drink by any people, is, in our judgment, morally wrong, and ought to be viewed as such by the churches of Jesus Christ uni-

[7] Narrative. [8] Narrative. [9] P. 445.

versally."[10] "It is earnestly hoped," they say, "that the time is not far distant when the light shall shine with such distinctness on this subject that no Christian will be able, in good conscience, to make, vend or use ardent spirits as a drink, and when no person will apply for admission to the communion of the Church who has not himself become an example of the total abstinence which we urge and commend."

The Assembly of 1835[11] affirm that "public sentiment seems to be settling down into one almost unanimous position, namely, that the use of ardent spirits as a common drink, and the traffic in it, are immoralities not to be countenanced by the Church of Christ. Here," they add, "let us take our stand, and, by divine assistance, endeavor, as speedily as possible, to purge the Church from this deadly infection. Let the broad banner of total abstinence from inebriating drinks be one under which the followers of Jesus shall, by their own personal examples at least, be found to rally."

The Assembly of 1837[12] say, "It is with the utmost surprise and pain that we learn, from the reports of two or three Presbyteries, that some of their members, and even ruling elders, still manufacture and sell ardent spirits." "No Church can shine as a light in the world while she openly sanctions and sustains any practices which are so evidently destructive of the best interests of society."

The Assembly of 1840[13] (N. S.) "recommend to all the members of the churches under" their "care, to be found the fast, unflinching and active friends of temperance, abstaining from all forms and fashions

[10] Narrative. [11] Narrative. [12] Narrative, p. 510. [13] P. 15

which would countenance, to any extent, the sin of intemperance; avoiding even the appearance of evil; disentangling themselves from all implication with the traffic and manufacture; and especially presenting in their whole lives a standing and unvarying exemplification of the only true principle of temperance—total abstinence from everything that will intoxicate."

In the Assembly of 1842 (O. S.), p. 16.

"*Overture No.* 15. The question whether the manufacturer, vender or retailer of intoxicating drinks should be continued in the full communion of the Church. The committee recommended the adoption of the following resolution, viz., That whilst the Assembly rejoice in the success of the temperance reformation, and will use all lawful means to promote it, they cannot sanction the adoption of any new terms of communion. Which was adopted."

In the Assembly of 1843 (O. S.), p. 189, it was

"*Resolved,* That the records [of the Synod of Pittsburg] be approved except so far as they seem to establish a general rule in regard to the use and sale of ardent spirits as a beverage, which use and sale are generally to be decidedly disapproved, but each case must be decided in view of all the attendant circumstances that go to modify and give character to the same."

The Assembly of 1848 (O. S.)[14] adopted the following minute in reference to temperance and other secular societies for moral ends:

"The Church of Jesus Christ is a spiritual body, to which have been given the ministry, oracles and

[14] Pp. 58, 59.

ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world. It is the great instrumentality of the Saviour, through which, by his eternal Spirit, he dispenses salvation to the objects of his love. Its ends are holiness and life, to the manifestation of the riches and glory of divine grace, and not simply morality, decency and good order, which may to some extent be secured without faith in the Redeemer or the transforming efficacy of the Holy Spirit. The laws of the Church are the authoritative injunctions of Christ, and not the covenants, however benevolent in their origin and aim, which men have instituted of their own will; and the ground of obligation which the Church, *as such*, inculcates, is the authority of God speaking in his word, and not pledges of honor which create, measure and define the peculiar duties of all voluntary associations. In this kingdom of God the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners, and no church judiciary ought to pretend to make laws which shall bind the conscience, or to issue recommendations which shall regulate manners, without the warrant, explicit or implied, of the revealed will of God. It is, hence, beside the province of the Church to render its courts, which God ordained for spiritual purposes, subsidiary to the schemes of any association founded in the human will and liable to all its changes and caprices. No court of Christ can exact of his people to unite with the temperance, moral reform, colonization, or any other society which may seek their aid. Connection with such institutions is a matter of Christian liberty. Their objects may be in every respect worthy of the countenance and sup-

port of all good men, but in so far as they are moral and essentially obligatory, the Church promotes them among its own members—and to none others does its jurisdiction extend—by the means which God has ordained for the edification of his children. Still, in the exercise of their Christian liberty, as good citizens, as patriotic subjects of the State, from motives of philanthropy and from love to God, Christian people may choose to adopt this particular mode of attempting to achieve the good at which all moral societies profess to aim; they have a right to do so, and the Church, as long as they endorse no false principles and countenance no wrong practices, cannot interfere with them. Recognizing these propositions as the truths of the word of God, this General Assembly, as a court of Jesus Christ, cannot league itself with any voluntary society, cannot exact of those who are subject to its discipline to do so, but must leave the whole matter, where the Scriptures leave it, to the prudence, philanthropy and good sense of God's children, each man having a right to do as to him shall seem good.

"These societies must appeal not to church courts, but to church members. When they proclaim principles that are scriptural and sound, it is not denied that the Church has a right, and under certain circumstances may be bound, to bear testimony in their favor; and when, on the other hand, they inculcate doctrines which are infidel, heretical and dangerous, the Church has a right to condemn them. In conformity with these statements the General Assembly has no hesitation in cordially approving of abstinence from intoxicating drinks as a matter of Christian ex-

pediency, according to the words of the apostle in Romans xiv. 21, 'It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak,' and in expressing its affectionate interest in the cause of temperance; and would recommend to its ministers and elders who have become connected with temperance societies, to use every effort to prevent the introduction of any other principle as the ground of their pledge, and to throw around these institutions those safeguards which shall be the means of rescuing them from the excesses to which they are liable from influences opposed to or aside from the Gospel of Christ."

The Assembly of 1854[15] (N. S.) "commend this new system of legislation [prohibition] to the attention and support of all ministers and churches connected with this body." In 1855[16] the same Assembly declares, "The experience of two hundred years proves that this evil can never be removed or effectively resisted while the traffic in intoxicating drinks is continued, it being necessary, if we would stop the effect, to remove the cause," and it resolves,

"That, in the opinion of this body, laws prohibiting the sale of intoxicating drinks can interfere with the rights of no man; because no man has a right of any name or nature inconsistent with the public good, or at war with the welfare of the community; it being a well-known, universally acknowledged maxim of law 'That no man has a right to use his own to the injury of his neighbor.'

"That we earnestly recommend to the ministers

[15] P 503. [16] Pp. 30, 31.

and congregations in our connection, and to all others, to persevere in vigorous efforts until laws shall be enacted in every State and territory of our beloved country prohibiting entirely a traffic which is the principal cause of drunkenness, and its consequent pauperism, crime, taxation, lamentation, war and ruin to the bodies and souls of men, with which the country has so long been afflicted."

In 1860[17] the Assembly (N. S.), on an overture from W. F. Stuart, Samuel Polkey, Robert Barry, Joseph H. Leonard and Parker Earle, representatives of different temperance organizations in Illinois, praying that this General Assembly would "give the temperance cause a proper prominence among the means of reform sustained by the Church," and especially suggesting that if it would "arrange or recommend that some proper temperance movement should sustain the same relation to the churches as the tract, the Bible and the missionary causes do, both morally and financially, it would be of immense advantage to the cause," replied as follows:

"In compliance with the request of the petitioners, the Assembly are willing to assign to the cause of temperance a relation to our Church not dissimilar to that which has been given to the benevolent objects with which it is compared. But with none of these do we maintain any other connection than that which their own moral power secures upon the free affection and esteem of our members. Very cheerfully and earnestly would this Assembly commend the cause of temperance to all the ministers and members of our Church, and urge them heartily to co-operate with

[17] P. 262.

every judicious effort in a Christian spirit to promote it; that pastors frequently preach upon the subject, and especially that no countenance be given to those social usages by which great temptations to intemperance are thrown before their fellow-men."

In 1864[18] the Assembly (N. S.) "reiterates the sentiments and recommendations of former Assemblies, and calls upon its ministers and the members of its churches to renew their efforts in this direction, and especially to refrain from the use of cider, beer and ale as a beverage, and also from the manufacture and similar use of domestic wines."

The same Assembly in 1865[19] "reaffirms the testimony of former Assemblies on this subject, and commends anew to all the ministers and churches under its care, the principles and practices so fully embodied in this testimony." It also directed the Stated Clerk to prepare a paper "exhibiting the Testimony of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America on the Sin, the Evils and the Remedy of Intemperance," and to print it in the Appendix to the Minutes.

The Assembly of 1865[20] (O. S.), in answer to an overture "asking for such a deliverance by the General Assembly as may encourage virtuous and philanthropic men in their efforts to purge our country from this gigantic evil," adopted the following minute:

"The General Assembly has repeatedly expressed its earnest desire for the universal prevalence of temperance among the people of this land. But as a new exigency has arisen, growing out of the demoralizing

[18] P. 508. [19] P. 53. [20] Pp. 570, 571.

tendency of war, this Assembly enjoins upon all their ministers, ruling elders and church members to use their influence upon those around them, particularly on our young men now returning from the army, and on our youth in academies and colleges, to practice entire abstinence from all intoxicating drinks as a beverage, which it is believed is the only sure protection against drunkenness. Intemperance is a great sin against God, as well as a bitter curse to man, obstructing the progress of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world, and weakening its power over the heart of men." Hence it is an imperative duty, required alike by piety and patriotism, to do whatever may be practicable "to stem the torrent that is sweeping myriads into the vortex of irretrievable ruin." Especially should there be the frequent utterance of friendly warning to the young and inconsiderate, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," accompanied by a corresponding example. This simple and effective remedy, carried into all the walks of life, will make our nation as prosperous and happy in peace as it has been heroic and victorious in war.

Dr. Elliott offered an additional paper, which was adopted, viz.:

The great increase of intemperance throughout the land, especially in our towns and large cities, renders it imperative on the Church to put forth her influence to arrest it in its destructive progress. But to render her influence effective she must purge herself from all participation in the sin by removing from her pale all who are engaged in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks for use as a common beverage.

When a person has been admitted to sealing ordinances in Christ's house, he ought not to be excluded but upon grounds which are sanctioned by the word of God and the discipline of the Church; and where such exclusion takes place, it is always founded upon an alleged offence against the authority and laws which Christ has established in his house. Hence, one of the ends of discipline, as laid down in our standards, is "the removal of offences" from the Church of Christ. In the very outset, then, it becomes necessary to ascertain what is an offence. In our Book of Discipline it is defined to be "anything in the principles or practice of a church member which is contrary to the word of God, or which, if it be not in its own nature sinful, may tempt others to sin, or mar their spiritual edification." (Chap. i., § 3.) That the practice of manufacturing and retailing intoxicating drinks is, in its own nature, sinful, we do not affirm, and need not therefore consider it, in this sense, an offence against the laws of Christ's house. But that it tempts others to sin and mars their spiritual edification is too obvious to require proof. The retailer is the proximate agent in tempting many to drink to drunkenness, and in forming in others the appetite for strong drink which leads to brutal intoxication. In doing this he offends against God's children, who are grieved at his conduct, which is productive of such injurious results both to the bodies and souls of men. On these grounds, therefore, he is guilty of "an offence" against the word of God, which is very explicit in setting its seal of condemnation on such conduct. In the eighth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle has decided this point

with great precision. In the church of Corinth some thought it to be right to eat meat which had been offered to idols, others thought it wrong. The matter was submitted to the apostle, who decided that although the act was not in its own nature sinful, yet if it became the occasion of offence or injury to a weak brother, it ought not to be done. "But meat commendeth us not to God; for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol temple, shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols, and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? But when ye so sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, *ye sin against Christ.* Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." According to this decision of the apostle, therefore, men "sin against Christ" when they "sin against the brethren" by doing that which, though not sinful in itself, becomes a stumbling-block to them, and tempts them to the commission of sin. Against such a course the apostle guards professing Christians, and declares that he had determined to avoid it.

Now, the apostle's decision in regard to the case at Corinth, applies to the use of intoxicating drinks when manufactured and sold for a common beverage. When prepared and sold for this purpose, those who do so "sin against the brethren and wound their weak

conscience," and thus "sin against Christ." Hence they are guilty of "an offence," their conduct being "contrary to the word of God."

Thus far the subject appears very plain. That a manufacturer and retailer of intoxicating drinks for the purpose mentioned is guilty of an offence proved to be such from Scripture, the foregoing remarks clearly demonstrate. But is it such an offence as ought to exclude persons from the full privileges of the Church? In maintaining the affirmative of this question, it is important to remark that whatever would prevent the admission of a person to the sealing ordinances of the Church, on his first application, ought, if found in connection with his character or conduct after his admission, to exclude him from her communion. This is so evident as to require no proof. What then would be considered a sufficient bar to the full enjoyment of the privileges of the Church? To this we reply that anything in the principles or practice of the applicant for admission which greatly impaired or destroyed the credibility of his profession of faith in Christ would be a sufficient ground of refusal. For the ground of admission, as presented both in the word of God and the standards of the Church, is a credible profession of faith in the Son of God. In the case of the jailor, the Ethiopian eunuch, and even of Simon Magus, who afterward apostatized, a credible profession was required and exhibited before they were admitted to the communion of the society of the faithful. The same principle is recognized in our standards. "Those who are admitted to sealing ordinances shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety." (Dir.

Vor., chap. i., § 3.) (See also chap. iv., § 4.) From hese passages it is manifest that such a profession s involves credible evidence of Christian character, n which knowledge and piety are essential elements, s required by our Book of those who would be admitted to sealing ordinances. Such being the case, whatever essentially impairs or destroys this evidence ars the way to their admission. Accordingly, it is rovided that "such as are found to be ignorant or candalous, notwithstanding their profession of the ith and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, ought be kept from that sacrament, by the power which hrist has left in his Church, until they receive inruction and manifest their reformation." (L. Cat., 2, 3.) Ignorance and immorality of conduct are here dicated as sufficient grounds on which to refuse an pplicant admission to the table of the Lord. The ason is that where either or both exist there is a ant of credible evidence of Christian character, and here this is wanting, the person ought not to be admitted. And on the same ground, a person who has en admitted, if he be afterward found to be ignont or scandalous, and thus destitute of the evidence Christian character, ought to be excluded.

In the case which we are considering, the person in estion does not give credible evidence in favor of s Christian character. He does not give such satistion with respect to his "knowledge and piety" as sufficient to entitle him to continue in the full privges of the Church as a member in good standing. or the man who, at the present time, is ignorant of e effects of the practice of the manufacture and sale intoxicating drinks as a common beverage, in

tempting others to sin and "marring their spiritual edification," must be criminally regardless of what is going on around him. And he who, knowing this, perseveres in the practice, evinces a state of heart directly the reverse of that which is produced by "the grace of God," that "teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." On the ground, therefore, that his profession of religion is destitute of the attributes which are necessary to render it credible, he ought not to be continued in the communion of the Church, nor certified as a member in good standing.

We are aware that it has been objected to this view of the case that it is establishing a new term of communion not before known in the Church. But upon the principles laid down and established, it is not. We have seen that credible evidence of Christian character, involving the exhibition of "knowledge and piety," is the old term of communion laid down in God's word and the standards of our Church. It has also been made to appear that the practice of manufacturing and retailing intoxicating drinks as a beverage is a sin against the brethren and against Christ, and, while persevered in, vitiates this evidence and works a forfeiture of the privileges of Christian communion. If the practice of the Church has been to any extent favorable to the admission or continuance of such persons in her communion, it only proves that the Church, in these cases, has overlooked or neglected to enforce the true principle of her standards. It cannot be fairly drawn into argument to prove that the principle is not there, or if there, that it ought

not to be applied in this, as in other cases of visible offence against Christ and his Church. We conclude, therefore, that it is not adopting any new term of communion to exclude persons from sealing ordinances on the ground of their manufacturing and vending intoxicating drinks as a beverage. On the contrary, it is only falling back upon the teachings of the Bible and the Constitution of the Church, which requires visible Christianity, in a credible form, of those who would partake of these ordinances, and refuses the privilege to those who by overt acts of offence fail to present such evidence.

On motion, the two papers on this subject were referred to the Board of Publication, to be printed as a tract.

In 1866[21] the Assembly (N. S.) declared "that total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks as a beverage is demanded from every Christian by the condition of society, the purity of the Church and the word of God."

In the General Assembly of 1871, in answer to overtures from the Presbyteries of Pittsburg and Philadelphia Central, these deliverances of former Assemblies were adopted and endorsed as the testimony of the United Church; and it was declared that—

"This General Assembly, believing the manufacture, sale, and use of alcoholic stimulants as a beverage, to be contrary to the spirit of God's word and wholly inconsistent with the claims of Christian duty, reiterate the testimonies of former Assemblies on the subject." They also "affirm their conviction

[21] P. 274.

of the reprehensible complicity in the guilt of the aforesaid traffic of those who knowingly rent their premises for such purposes, or endorse licenses that legalize it.

"And further, to give emphasis to the action now taken, and the utterances of former Assemblies above referred to, the Board of Publication are directed to print an abstract of such former testimonies as cover the points referred to in the overtures, and send a copy thereof to every pastor and stated supply within our bounds, with the direction of the Assembly to read the same publicly from their respective pulpits."—*Minutes*, p. 590.